DOUBT & DERISION OVER BAGHDAD | STATE OF THE EARTH | WISH I WERE A SOLDIER

THE AMERICAN ENTERPRISE

POLITICS, BUSINESS, AND CULTURE

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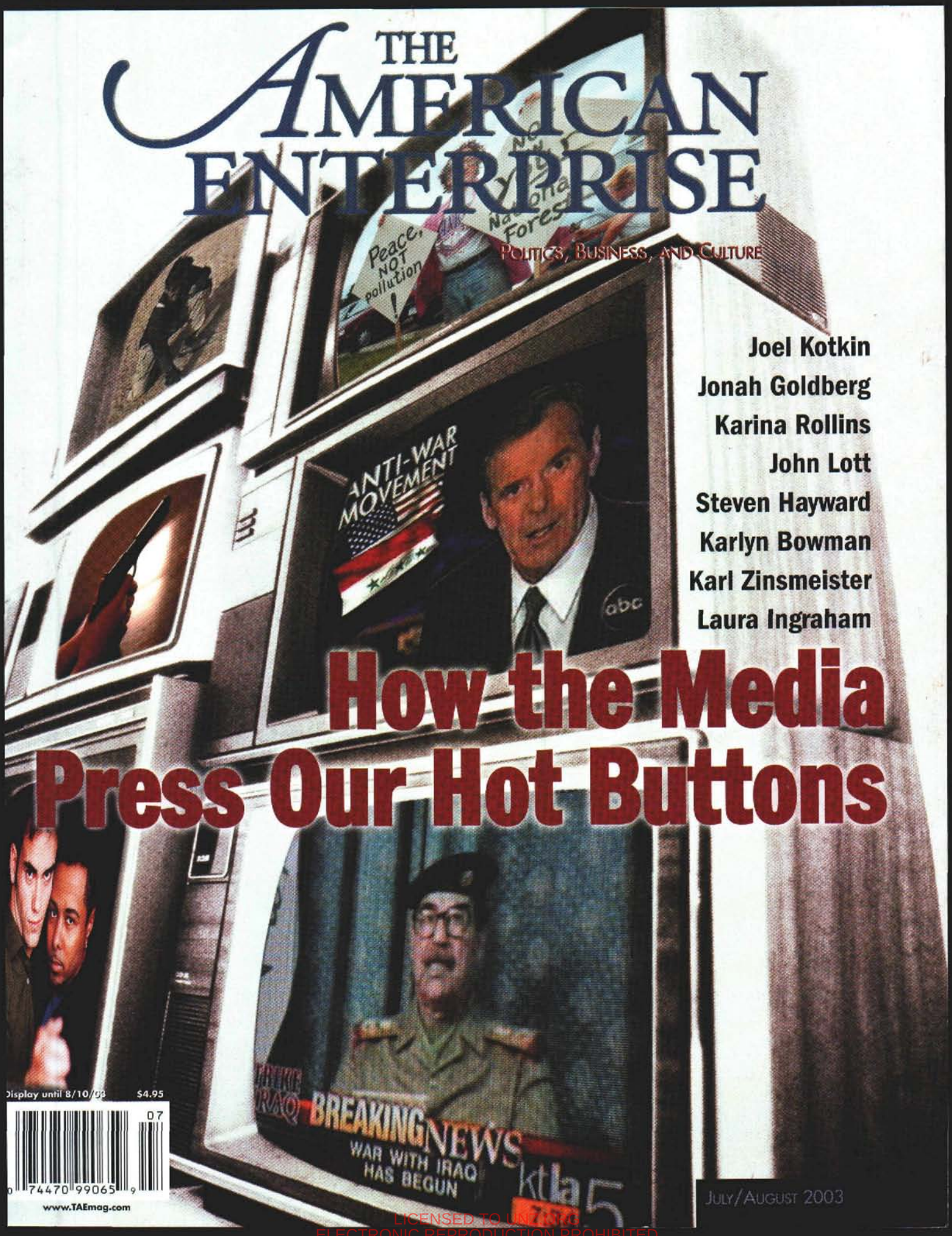
How the Media Press Our Hot Buttons



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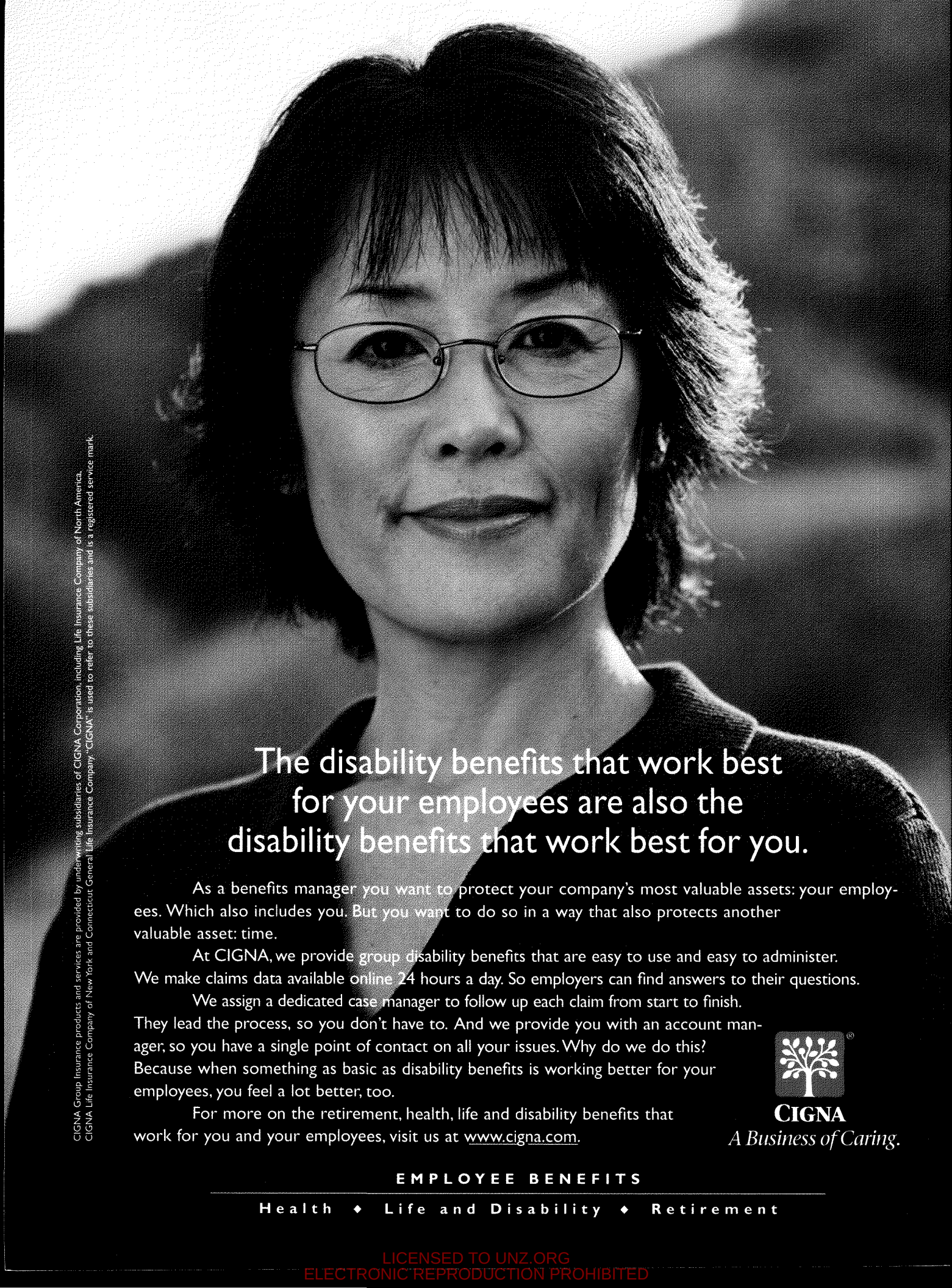

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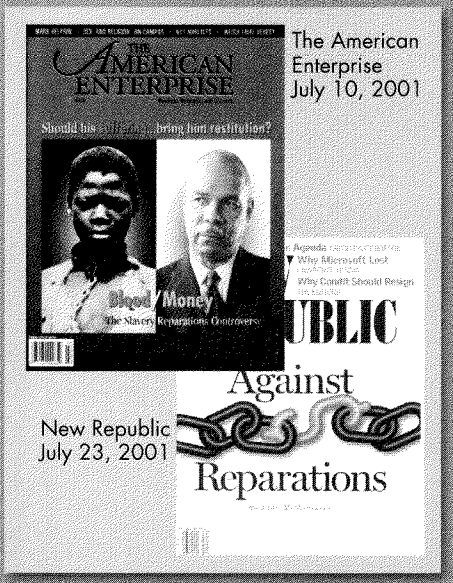

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July 23, 2001

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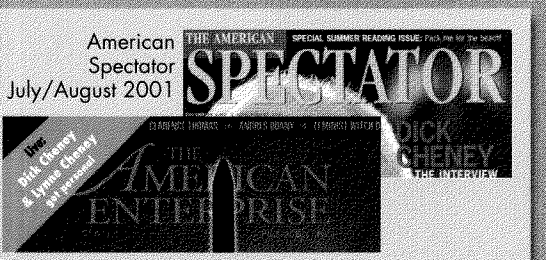

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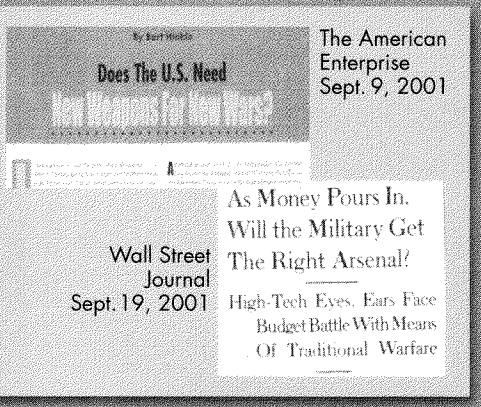

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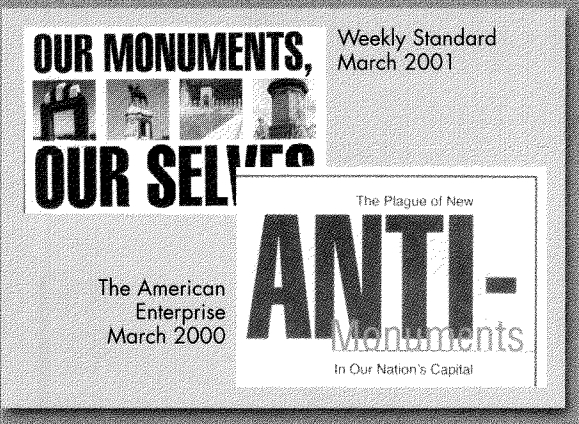

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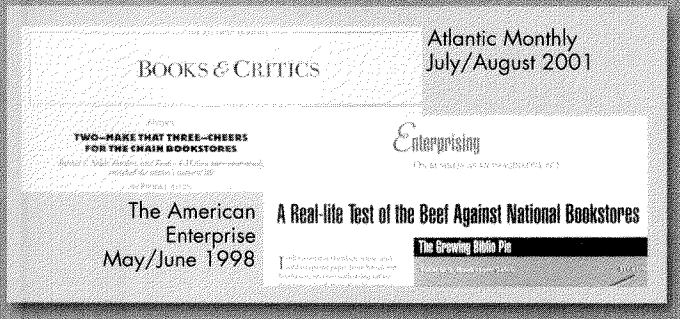

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POLITICS, BUSINESS, AND CULTURE

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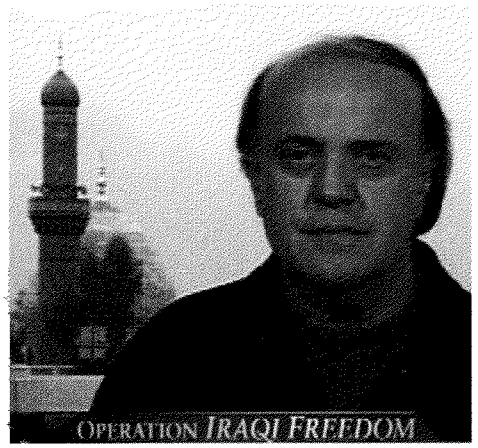

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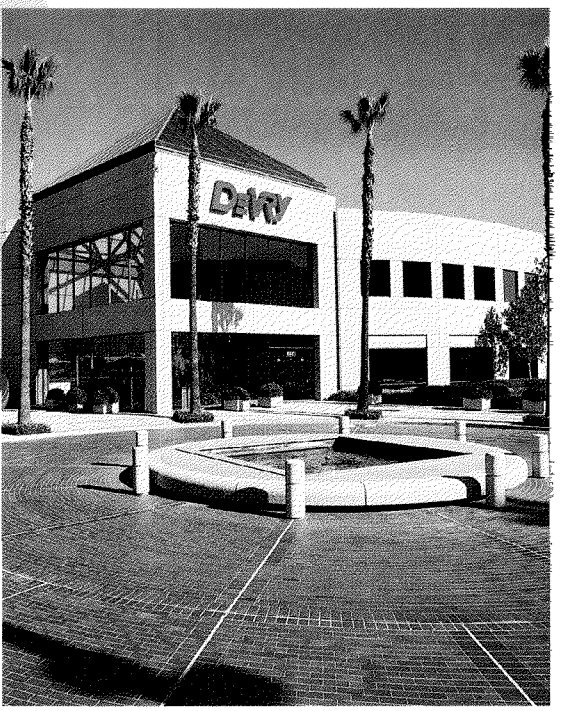

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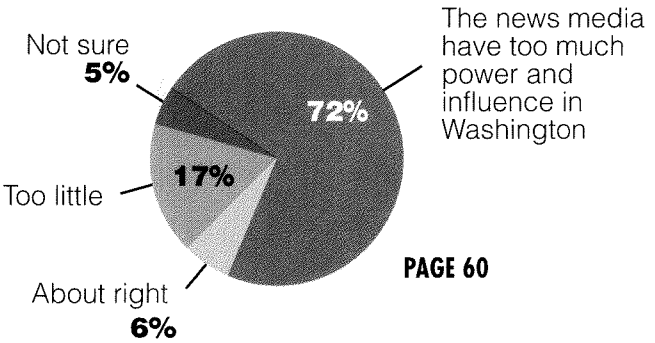

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Bird's Eye

Karl Zinsmeister

Jayson Blair's World, and Iraq

This installment of *The American Enterprise* is all about poor reporting. Unfortunately, there is enough of it out there that the issue was depressingly easy to put together.

I'm not talking about media lies like those generated by Jayson Blair, the *New York Times* reporter who was recently discovered to have simply fabricated dozens and dozens of stories, quotes, and facts—without the folks at his august employer ever figuring out that they had a pathological liar writing on their front pages. I'm talking about a much more endemic problem, a more permanent and serious trauma. I'm referring to the mistakes, manipulations, and misimpressions fomented by journalists not out of dishonesty, but out of ignorance, pack thinking, or lack of intellectual diversity in the newsroom.

Many members of the media establishment who read this critique (this is a subject they hate) will be tempted to roll their eyes and pronounce me a member of "the right wing conspiracy" for even giving credence to the idea that we have a problem with media bias in this country. That's how they've treated all who have drawn attention to this subject in the past. Top reporters and editors are an extremely clubby group, and they punish anyone who doesn't close ranks with the club whenever its competence comes into question.

When you are as powerful and unchecked as our major news sources are (72 percent of Americans now say "the news media have too much power and influence in Washington"), and as ideologically unified (a remarkable number come from the same schools, and the same parts of the country; 11 out of 12 national reporters currently vote the same way), then ignoring your critics, or marginalizing them if they somehow manage to get attention anyway, is often a clever defense strategy. But in this case, there is a problem with that course: The American people are on the side of the critics. On the day we sent this issue off to the printer, the editor and managing editor of the *New York Times* resigned—wounded by the tumbling credibility of that newspaper in the wake of recent reporting scandals. The time for denial of this problem is over.

The credibility of our major media, and public respect for their work, have nose-dived over the last generation. By 58-38 percent, Americans think today's news organizations are more inaccurate than accurate. Back in 1965, that ratio was almost exactly reversed. Only 31 percent of the public now say the news media "help society to solve problems;" fully 58 percent feel reporters "get in the way of society solving problems." Only 30 percent believe news organizations "care about the people they report on;" 55 percent say "they don't care." Just 23 percent of our citizenry say the news media are "willing to admit mistakes;" a troubling 67 percent say our news reporters "try to cover up mistakes."

Asked in late March of this year how much confidence they had "that the press is giving an accurate picture of how the [Iraq] war is going," only 30 percent of Americans polled by the Pew Research Center answered "a great deal of confidence." That is lower than the 40 percent who said they had "a great deal of confidence" that the U.S. military "is giving the public an accurate picture of how the war is going." If the supposedly neu-

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tral observers in the press corps are getting much lower marks for objectivity than the special interest whose performance they are examining, the press has a problem.

When survey researchers ask about specific news sources, they find that about one citizen out of four thinks he can believe all or most of what he sees on the major TV news networks today. This is down from as recently as 1996. Only about one out of five citizens gives his newspaper high marks for believability. Magazines like *Newsweek* and *Time* score at only 20 percent and 23 percent, respectively, for believability. Among broadcast media, National Public Radio comes in last.

One of the ways the public is responding to all of this is by walking away: National TV news viewing fell by nearly half from 1991 to 2002. Newspaper readership tumbled from 54 percent to 41 percent of the public.

Asked whether news organizations are fair in the way they report on specific hot-button controversies, Americans respond by about two to one that the media tend to take sides. The number of citizens who believe the press is "politically biased" continues to rise, and currently stands at six out of ten (including the vast number of Republicans and also a clear majority of Democrats). And these citizens are not imagining things. National reporters admit that they vote for Democrats over Republicans by a ratio of about 12 to one. Sixty-one percent of Washington reporters place themselves on the left of the political spectrum, versus 9 percent who say they are personally on the right.

America's news media are out of balance. Our citizenry objects to this. (For some details, see the data assembled by Karlyn Bowman on pages 60-62.) If newspeople don't start taking today's complaints about poor reporting more seriously, public disaffection will only grow.

Media people have to recognize that there are serious problems in the way our press now operates—and that the American public is not amused.

Many specific studies have documented today's media spin. An analysis of CBS News transcripts found that in one year of reporting on George W. Bush's proposed tax cut, the number of opponents cited on air outstripped the number of supporters by two to one. Another content analysis of news broadcasts from several TV networks during the period January to April of 2001 found that the environmental reporting on ABC, CBS, and NBC included not a single source who disagreed with claims that global warming is a dire global threat. Similarly, when the U.S. rejected the Kyoto Treaty, 69 percent of air time was given to critics of that decision, versus just 31 percent for supporters.

In the feature section of this magazine we pile up many examples of unfair, twisted, and adversarial reporting (as well as some exemplary good reporting), on subjects ranging from gun ownership, to the sources of local economic growth, to pollution questions. Our first feature article, by Karina Rollins, chronicles some of the many unnecessary errors of fact and interpretation that colored our news during the Iraq war.

One of my own favorite instances of war-reporting idiocy was NPR correspondent Tom Gjelten's statement on March 21—exactly one day after troops crossed the Kuwait border into Iraq—that "if the war is still going on a week from now, that will be a bad sign." Priceless. Here is a guy who I'm willing to bet has never won a fistfight, never mind a battle, telling Americans that if it takes more than a week to subdue a nation bigger than the entire northeastern United States, that constitutes failure.

By the end of March, many of Gjelten's fellow lemmings, er, I mean reporters, were following the same defeatist line. On April 1, Robert Wright of the online magazine *Slate* diagnosed with great authority "the Pentagon's failure to send enough troops to take Baghdad." "As the war drags on," he droned, "as more civilians die and more Iraqis see their resistance hailed across the Arab world as a watershed in the struggle against Western imperialism, the traditionally despised Saddam could gain appreciable support among his people." That same week, *The New Yorker*'s Seymour Hersh (who has filed enough false reports and way-off predictions over the years to justify a new Guinness Book entry for unreliability) blubbered that "Rumsfeld simply failed to anticipate the consequences of protracted warfare. He put Army and Marine units in the field with few reserves and an insufficient number of tanks." Uh, fellas, U.S. forces entered Baghdad on April 5—before many subscribers had even finished reading your gloomy tales.

Around the same time, the BBC aired claims that the U.S. "could take, bluntly, a couple to 3,000 casualties." Actually, a lot less than 200 U.S. soldiers were killed during combat.

Syndicated columnist Michelle Malkin had an interesting idea in mid April. She decided to compare the pessimistic reports published in the liberal press with real-life photos sent back from the front by cameramen. She quotes from the captions on photos from all parts of Iraq. They document Iraqis kissing, waving to, hugging, and giving flowers to American soldiers. The pictures showed that developments weren't nearly so dark as the reporters' words suggested.

The true course of the war—when compared to much of the media analysis that accompanied it—was the story of the dog that didn't bark. "Contrary to the predictions, there were no homeland terrorist attacks, no chemical gassings of the troops, no mass mobilization of Arab killers, no 100-percent-of-the-vote fierce support for Saddam Hussein, no quagmire of unending length, no public-opinion debacle for President Bush, no hopelessly fractured alliances," points out media critic Brent

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Bozell. "But," he continues, "being a journalist means never having to say you're sorry."

For some journalists, it also means never having to admit you're a nincompoop. Take a whiff of the megalomaniacal egotism in this war-time statement by TV correspondent Peter Arnett:

> The first plan has failed…clearly the American war planners misjudged the determination of Iraqi forces. And I personally do not understand how that happened, because I've been there many times and in my commentaries on television I would tell the Americans about the determination of the Iraqi forces…. But me, and others who felt the same way, were not listened to by the Bush administration.

That's five uses of "I," "me," or "my" in three sentences. Gosh, Peter, I don't know how the boys finally managed to win without you about one week later (after you were fired for an even more tasteless interview aired on Iraqi TV).

Of course, no respectable media outlet should have sent Peter Arnett to the Middle East in the first place—for Arnett has a long history of making false claims and reporting unsupported inflammatory statements. This is the same journalist who back in 1991 peddled Iraqi misinformation about a "milk factory" bombed by Americans, the man who aired a famously false report on CNN claiming the U.S. military had used nerve gas on defectors in Vietnam, who once said he would let G.I.s die rather than reveal enemy plans he discovered as a journalist. Sending Geraldo Rivera to Iraq was a bad idea on the part of the TV fluffernutters. Using the thoroughly discredited Peter Arnett was out-and-out malpractice.

The New York Times, *CNN, ABC, and* Newsweek *are not about to let any snoopy observers be embedded in* their *offices during a crisis.*

Some of the most overwrought bits of reporting during the Iraq War—subsequently echoed and re-echoed around the globe by pouncing critics—centered on the looting of the Iraqi National Museum in Baghdad. The initial reports that thousands of priceless artifacts had disappeared gushed out when low-level museum employees entered the building after American forces liberated Baghdad, saw empty cabinets and shelves, and shrieked to drama-seeking foreign reporters that all the best pieces were gone.

But the reporting that sparked all this storm and fury was wrong. Completely wrong.

Yes, the cabinets were empty. *Because the museum's senior employees had stashed all the really valuable parts of the collection in vaults just as fighting broke out.* "We knew a war was coming, so it was our duty to protect everything," explained a museum director.

Alas, only one reporter in Baghdad bothered to check beneath the surface of the juicy treasure-looting story for the real facts—Yaroslav Trofimov of the *Wall Street Journal.* (More on pp. 24-25.) And by the time Trofimov's revelation was printed on April 17, the reporting frenzy had proceeded so far that the international public had become irrevocably convinced that the national treasures of Iraq had all been hauled off or destroyed by vandals. Even after the facts were in, the media did very little to correct the record. I dare say most readers of this magazine will be learning for the first time that the museum-looting story was almost entirely bogus.

The media were guilty of more than just reporting unchecked information and then rumor-mongering that falsehood into an artificial scandal. Right from the beginning, there was an accusatory tone to much of this reporting. Why were American soldiers blamed because Iraqi yahoos decided to go wilding the day after they threw off Saddam's 30-year yoke?

There was no intelligent differentiation in the reporting between the several varieties of looting: righteously outraged citizens plundering Saddam's palaces and government offices (political behavior); scavenging by desperately poor people long denied life's very basics while the oligarchs among them luxuriated (survival instinct); thefts from museums, libraries, and banks that included some inside jobs carried out by Baath Party bosses with keys; simple criminal activity; and everyday post-Super-Bowl-style anarchy. Worse, in all these cases, media castigation tended to be directed not at the Iraqi perpetrators, but at American troops for "not doing enough" to stop them.

There was much criticism of U.S. officers, by anchormen and sniffing Western curators safely ensconced far from where the bullets were flying, for their "failure" to stop Iraqis from breaking into the national library. But this failure to intervene was no casual dereliction. It was a battlefield decision taken to avoid casualties and the destructive fire of weapons into a sensitive site. Once again, the *Wall Street Journal* was the only media outlet in Baghdad enterprising enough to discover the truth. As the *Journal* eventually reported, Lieutenant Colonel Eric Schwartz of the U.S. Army's 3rd Infantry Division's Task Force 1-64, "whose functions also include feeding the lions in the abandoned Baghdad Zoo next door, couldn't move into the museum compound and protect it from looters because his soldiers were taking fire from the building—and were determined not to respond."

It didn't occur to the people casually excoriating American G.I.s for not saving more manuscripts and artifacts that doing so would have required ending a good number of equally priceless Iraqi and American lives. And very likely have done even more physical damage to the building and its contents. Can you imag-

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ine the reaction of these very same critics if the U.S. *had* used force to secure the structure and killed Iraqis and damaged collections in the process?

The openness of the U.S. military reflects their confidence in the righteousness of their work, the competence of their leadership, and the professionalism of their rank-and-file.

One must ask where this kind of negativity toward soldiers operating in difficult circumstances comes from. The answer is: from the inchoate anti-military suspicion that is permanently in the air in most editorial suites. Most of the pressies I ran into in Iraq were just typical reporters—meaning they were disproportionately left-wing, cynical, wiseguy Ivy League types, with a high *prima donna* quotient.

Some media outlets made wise and careful choices as to whom they sent to Iraq. Fox, for instance, embedded Greg Kelly, a correspondent who is himself a Marine reservist, with the Army's 3rd Infantry Division. He hit the ground running in terms of shop knowledge, and enjoyed instant credibility with both his military informants and viewers. But there are numerous studies today showing that members of the major media are now nearly as out of the mainstream politically and culturally as university professors. I ran into plenty of those folks in Iraq and Kuwait.

You have to realize that soldiers start out suspicious of reporters. And given the major media's checkered record of interaction with the military, who can blame them? Yet few of the reporters I observed did much to earn the trust of the fighting men they were writing about.

This was aggravated by the strong tendency of journalists to gang together. The pack mentality of the press can be observed in many settings—at major news events, in political campaign buses, any place where the press descends en masse. Rather than walking a mile in the shoes of the people they're reporting on, many journalists rely on the gossip and shop talk of their fellow scribes to find their storylines. During my Iraq sojourn I observed media folk passing far too much time hobnobbing with fellow reporters, mocking military mores in snide jokes, chafing at the little disciplines required by the military's life-and-death work, banding off as a group to watch DVDs on their computers in the evening, eating separately with each other in the mess hall during meals, and otherwise failing to take advantage of an unparalleled opportunity to enter deeply and perhaps sympathetically into the lives and minds of Americans in military service.

If you want to file accurate and illuminating stories, a lot more homework and humility toward your subject are called for. Especially on this subject—because few reporters know much about the fighting life. Worse, many show scant respect for the fighter's virtues. Many of the journalists embedded among U.S. forces with whom I crossed paths were fish out of water, and showed their discomfort clearly as they hid together in the press tents, fantasizing about expensive restaurants at home and plush hotels in Kuwait City, fondling keyboards and satellite phones with pale fingers, clinging to their world of offices and tattle and chatter where they could feel less ineffective, less testosterone deficient, more influential.

It was amusing on one level. But reporters are the interpreters for the rest of America of what's real and what's important in the world. And the vast politico-cultural gulf that separates most of them from martial ideals often produces portrayals of military work that are twisted in one fashion or another.

I observed this media-military gap myself when I filed reports from Iraq. There was, for instance, a story I sent to the *Los Angeles Times* describing certain of my interactions with the 82nd Airborne's infantry commander, whom I characterized as an impressive leader. An editor back in L.A. refused to run the article without inserting a sentence at the end warning that this positive assessment may have been influenced by the fact that I was embedded with U.S. troops myself, and therefore perhaps too sympathetic to their point of view. I was unreachable in the desert after sending the report in, and knew nothing of this outrageous attempt at back-seat editorializing. Thankfully, my magazine staff fought on my behalf and managed to get the offensive disclaimer watered down to a relatively innocent half-sentence attached to my conclusion: "Those who claim that 'embeds' have fallen under the mystique of the military may dismiss my view, but this man I see before me is very much a leader rather than a ruler."

For the record, my views of the U.S. military's performance in Iraq were formed by nothing but close daily scrutiny of their operations. I was on no leash. I went wherever I wanted without handlers. I talked to everybody, from major general to machine gunner to military dentist. Every reasonable request for information was satisfied.

The embedding program was an enormous gamble by the Pentagon. If there had been any serious slip-ups, there would have been scribes all over it, up-close and personal, with no chance to sweep anything away or airbrush the details. As someone who inveigles himself into other people's worlds for a living, I can tell you that I have never been given as much freedom to explore and talk to staff without restriction, so many chances to see sensitive information and procedures, so many open doors, and so many shoulders to peer over as the U.S. military allowed me during the Iraq War. I can assure you that the *New York Times*, CNN, ABC, and *Newsweek* are not about to let any similarly snoopy observers into *their* boardrooms or staff offices during some equivalent period of crisis operation. This openness reflects the U.S. military's confidence in the righteousness of their work, the competence of their leadership, and the professionalism of their rank-and-file. I am full of admiration for the people who took this risk, and—I freely admit—impressed that we have a military this candid.

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And I am quite certain I'm more qualified to pass objective judgment on these soldiers than some newsroom spinner who has carefully avoided "mystique" by never in her life spending any time actually observing military folks in action. I find it sad that James Poniewozik of *Time* magazine would criticize the embedded journalists as "biased," scalding us for spotlighting the swiftness and sureness with which American forces crushed the ballyhooed Republican Guards. It is pitiful, and disturbing, that John MacArthur, the trust-fund baby who uses grandpa's money to publish *Harper's* magazine, would brand both the embedded media and the U.S. military as "propagandists" for the Bush re-election campaign. What the hell does he know about what really happened in Baghdad and points south?

A classic example of a media figure abusing his access to national microphones to rave in unobjective ways was the commencement address given at Rockford College in May by *New York Times* reporter Chris Hedges. He described the U.S. unseating of Saddam as a grab for "empire" that showed Americans to be "pariahs, tyrants to others weaker than ourselves." He charged that "the only two ministries we bothered protecting" in Baghdad were "the oil ministry and the interior ministry"—because America came to Iraq "for oil and occupation."

On and on Hedges thundered: "We do not understand…", "We bumbled in…", "It will be a cesspool…", "Damaging to our souls…", "We have blundered…." Claiming that America has lost sight of "our own capacity for atrocity—for evil," Hedges argued that, yes, this was now a war of liberation: "A war of liberation by Iraqis from American occupation." (His middle-American audience of Illinois students and family members turned their backs, catcalled, and walked out during the address.)

This is appallingly over-inflated rhetoric from a daily reporter of America's self-styled newspaper of record. Alas, it is the sort of thing one encounters very often in the offices and overseas hotel rooms of our media elites. Again, the roots are cultural. Hedges is a committed leftist who says he grew up admiring the communists in the Spanish Civil War and "wanted that epic battle to define my own life." He proudly describes being raised by a pacifist father who "took us as children to anti-war demonstrations," mocked soldiers, and insisted that war is always an "abomination." "If we visited museums, he would never allow us to see the displays of weapons." Both parents "were social activists," and his father "was very involved in the gay rights movement." All of which is fine in our nation where people are free to believe whatever they damn well please. But is this the right man to be objectively interpreting America's defense and foreign policies in the pages of the *New York Times, Dallas Morning News*, and other publications where he was entrusted with critical reporting? Is it reasonable that this man was given a Pulitzer Prize for war coverage?

Shortly after I returned stateside, Joel Kotkin and Fred Siegel, two wise observers of American culture (and lifelong Democrats) who closely followed the media war coverage on the home front while I was in Iraq, wrote a review pronouncing "the prestige media" to be "big-time losers" in the second Gulf war. As Kotkin (who writes for us on a different subject on page 32) has warned elsewhere, today's media is a caste—a highly inbred, insular, self-referential group, largely Ivy League, urban, and politically homogeneous, that lacks connection with many traditional American institutions and values. The cultural gap separating the media from our military in turn reflects a more general divide yawning between our military and the nation's liberal elites as a whole.

Out in the real America, citizens feel pretty closely intertwined with the U.S. armed forces. The little church I attend in our rural New York village of 2,000 people had 19 relatives and neighbors on the prayer list all through March and April because they were serving with our military in the Iraq theater. But in the typical graduating class of an Ivy League university today, there are no more than three or four individuals who enter military service. On many college campuses, ROTC continues to be banned. The number of congressmen with military records is at an all-time low, and the number of congressmen with children in the armed forces can be counted on one hand. Very few top journalists personally know *anyone* in the military, much less anything accurate about military work.

Too many American professionals exhibit an ugly sense of superiority toward the military. In his new book *Keeping Faith*, author Frank Schaeffer describes how, after sending other children to New York University and Georgetown, his affluent Boston neighbors expressed disappointment at his son's decision to become a Marine. "He's so bright and talented and could do anything!" blurted one man. "What a waste!"

In his Illinois speech, *New York Times* reporter Hedges presented outrageous misinformation betraying exactly the same bias. He described American soldiers as "poor kids from Mississippi or Alabama or Texas who could not get a decent job or health insurance and joined the Army because it was all we offered them." What a scandalous misrepresentation of the fighting men and women I encountered in Iraq! And one built entirely on this reporter's unwitting sense of superiority to people serving in the military.

With a little more objectivity and professionalism, most of the reporting distortions we highlight in this issue could be drastically reduced. But first, more decision makers in the press have to recognize that there are serious problems in the way our media now operate—and that the American public is not amused.

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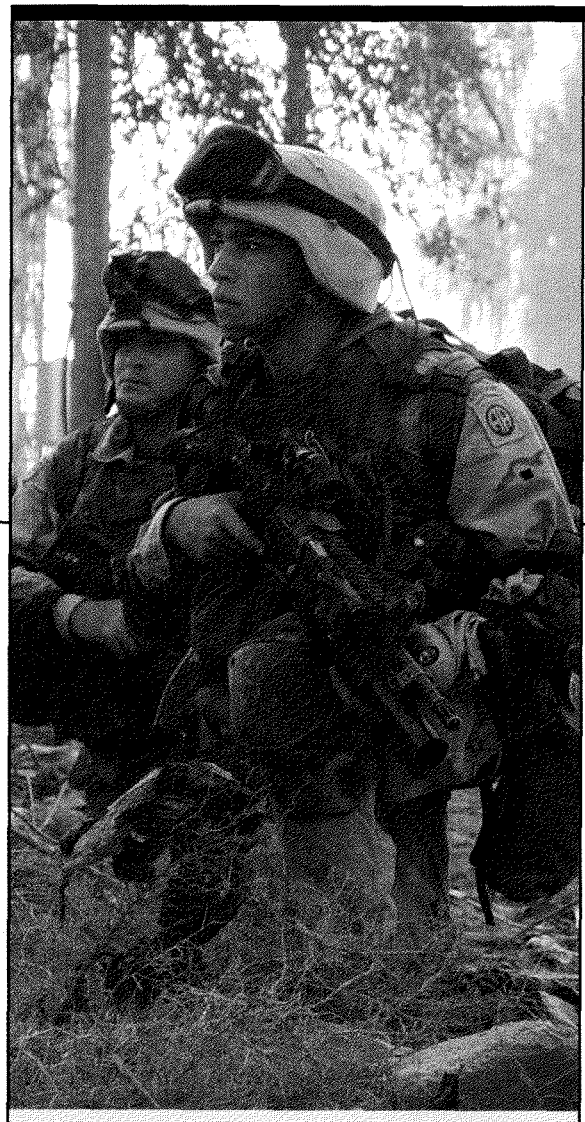

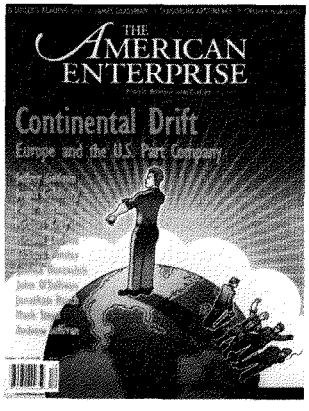

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Sidelights

"I was wrong about the war," MSNBC's **Chris Matthews** told crowds in a recent speech. "I thought there would be an Arab revolt, a tremendous uproar.... Nothing happened. I hate being wrong, but I'm glad." ❧ New Zealand's Health Ministry is considering a measure to make it illegal to sell junk food to children. Foods that might become off-limits include soft drinks, pies, sweets, and chocolate. ❧ Citizens attending town meetings in Shutesbury, Massachusetts now must sit according to smell. One section of the meeting hall is for those who never use perfumes or scented deodorants, another is for people who occasionally use fragrances, but didn't on the day of the meeting. The last section is for those wearing some sort of scent. ··· Environmental pollution in North America dropped 5 percent between 1995 and 2000, according to a recent study by the Commission for Environmental Cooperation. ❧ According to field polls, Democrat **Gray Davis** has become California's least-approved-of governor in the past 50 years. Sixty-five percent of Californians disapprove of his job performance. Forty-six percent would vote Davis out of office in the event of a recall. ··· The Chicago *Daily Herald* reported that a "former state worker with Democratic ties at a Joliet treatment center for the state's most dangerous sex offenders registered more than 125 of them to vote last fall. Voting patterns show the child molesters, rapists, and other sexual deviants overwhelmingly supported Democrats." ··· "**Hillary** [Clinton] is the only thing that can save the Democrats," according to *Congressional Quarterly* writer **Craig Crawford**. ❧ Actor **James Woods** describes part of the entertainment industry as "almost lunatic liberal. There's sort of a loony fringe that's way over the top and out of step with mainstream America." ❧ Honolulu resident **John Magnus** had over 100 T-shirts printed with the slogan "Will Work for Freedom." The shirts were sent to a variety of celebrities and politicians. Vice President **Dick Cheney** sent Magnus a friendly thank you note. Actor **Martin Sheen** sent the T-shirt back, the package still unopened.

"I'm totally confused. Get me a retired general."

Berlin officials are preparing for possible attacks by Islamist terrorists. Of the 400,000 or so foreigners living in the German capital, around 6,500 are believed to belong to extremist organizations, including 1,250 Muslims. ··· Berlin now has the highest crime rate in Germany. Foreigners, who make up 13 percent of the city's population, account for 29 percent of criminal suspects, including nearly half those accused of violent crime. ❧ Reporter David Lazarus of the *San Francisco Chronicle* researched the City by the Bay's panhandlers, and found they make an average of $30 a day by begging. ❧ A 12-year-old boy in El Paso, Texas was suspended from school for three days for sticking his tongue out at a girl who refused to be his girlfriend. Officials deemed the act a form of sexual harassment. ❧ Some British teachers have been lectured to avoid using the word "brainstorming," as it might offend students with epilepsy. They are advised to use "word storm" or "thought shower" instead. ❧ The European Union now regulates the size of knife blades. As of January 2004, the maximum length of knife blades permitted within the E.U. will be 10 cm (about four inches). According to the Adam Smith Institute, making sure that every blade in every kitchen conforms to the new law will cost over $20 billion. ··· In the aftermath of a crossbow killing at an Australian high school, authorities Down Under are urging a national ban on the archaic weapons. "Crossbows are killing machines—nothing else," according to police minister **John Watkins**. "Trafficking in these weapons is as deadly as drugs or guns." ··· The Orting, Washington city council is trying to ban spud guns—toy guns that fire pieces of potato. Orting has already banned Silly String and stink bombs. ❧ New York City paid out over $550 million in civil damages in 2001. Over $75 million went to people who sued after tripping on city sidewalks. ❧ **Jay Leno** thinks "France should participate in rebuilding Iraq. When it comes to having experience about what to do after losing a war, nobody does it better than the French." —BB

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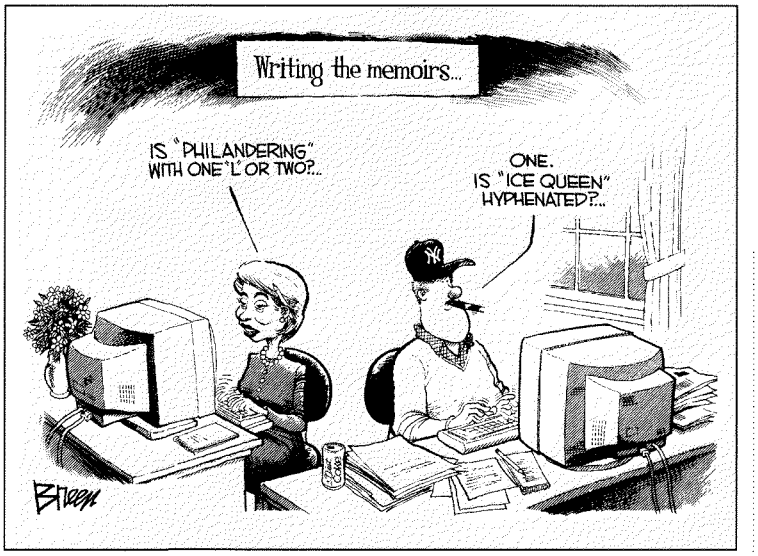

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REPAYING THE DEBT

The war in Iraq brought countless stories of courage and compassion: Two young American soldiers, left behind in the desert due to the fog of war, are found days later thirsty and hungry because they gave much of their food and water to Iraqi civilians. A severely wounded foreign-born U.S. Marine insists on standing as he takes his oath of citizenship at a Naval hospital and starts sobbing midway as he is overcome by pain and emotion. A soldier loses his leg in battle but bears no ill will and tells the visiting President Bush that it does "not bother me a bit."

Such examples of honor and sacrifice have made many Americans, including me, beam with pride. But at the same time, I have never felt so ashamed—ashamed that I myself have failed to serve my country. Speaking to friends and peers, I've discovered that I'm not alone in feeling this sense of guilt.

Call it the Gen-X lament. I am almost 28 years old, have two Ivy League degrees and work at a large New York law firm. By the standards of the upwardly mobile set in Manhattan, I should be content. But something keeps gnawing at my conscience, and I am left wondering whether I made a mistake by not sharing in my country's military service.

My generation's parents lived in the age of Vietnam, when respect for the military reached its nadir. Viewing American foreign policy as incorrigibly corrupt, they mainly had disdain toward those in the armed forces. In contrast, we grew up watching medical students rescued by soldiers kissing the ground upon reaching American soil, and seeing jubilant Kuwaitis thanking American fighters for liberating them. And despite the politically correct prattling of our professors, most of us saw America as a force for good in the world. (Radical chic loses its cachet when you see Chinese tanks crushing students.)

So while most of us grew up with respect for men and women in uniform, many of us Gen-Xers at the same time arrogantly treated military service as something almost beneath us. It was perfectly fine for a poor or working-class kid who lacked opportunities to enlist in the military, but it wasn't meant for *us*. We were more interested about going to a good school, getting a well-paying job, and aspiring to be the next Master of the Universe. Too many of us chose dot-com over CentCom.

It wasn't always like this. Only a couple of generations ago, it was not uncommon for someone from a privileged background to have served in the military for a few years, if not for life. Nearly 700 Harvard students died fighting in World War II; only about 20 were killed during the Vietnam War.

To be fair, a good number of young Americans from well-to-do backgrounds are in ROTC (at least at schools that have not banished it), attend one of the service academies, or have found their own way into the ranks of the armed forces. I have friends from college and law school who have served in the military. But they represent a small fraction of my peers. Too many ambitious young adults have viewed dedicating a few years to military service during their youth as a hindrance to their manic rush to burnish their paper credentials.

Part of the blame also lies with the Baby Boom generation that continues to view the military with suspicion. Many educated parents boast that their children are doing good in the world when they serve in the Peace Corps, or pursue a public interest career. But why shouldn't service in the military be afforded similar respect and prestige by the so-called "high society"?

The military, unfortunately, has reinforced such elitist assumptions by advertising military service most heavily as an opportunity to earn scholarships or learn job skills. Mottos such as "Army of One" appeal mostly to self-interest. But the honorable and courageous conduct of so many young Americans in Iraq has done

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what no slick advertising campaign could do. We have been reminded that serving our country in the armed forces—the subordination of one's selfish goals to service of a greater good—is one of the most noble things any person can do.

Like so many of my peers, I never seriously considered joining the military, and I have come to regret that. This sense of shame for my selfishness is particularly acute as a naturalized American. As my father once told me, America has saved him twice—once when it rescued South Korea from communism, and again 30 years later when it welcomed him to a new land.

Several years ago, when my cousin decided to join the U.S. Marines after graduating from high school, I told him he was making a mistake. "You should go to college first," I said. He didn't listen to me. He enlisted in the Marines and then went to college later. Now I am the one who envies him, because he did what so few of us do: He repaid the debt that we all owe to our country, and he did "good" for the world.

—*New York City lawyer* ***Kenneth Lee*** *writes regularly for* The American Enterprise.

HOT SHOT

I have never been what you would call a gun nut. Sure, I've always taken libertarian pleasure in defending an individual's Second Amendment rights in a theoretical argument. But when it comes to real-life encounters with guns themselves, I've been happy to keep my distance. I know that "guns don't kill people," that "people kill people," but it always seemed to me that the "people *and* guns" combo posed the greatest likelihood of doing real damage. So I've been content to argue consistently for a right to bear arms, while staying far away from those arms in my everyday life.

That's why it was so strange to find myself standing in the lane of a Florida shooting range recently, staring down a paper target through the sight of a loaded 9 mm Glock handgun, slowly moving my index finger onto the trigger. And enjoying every minute of it.

I don't come from Florida. I'm a Canadian living in Toronto. I was in Florida with my boyfriend for the wedding of one of my college pals, and I agreed to accompany him to the shooting range because he had been so patient and good-humored over the weekend in sitting through endless "Whatever happened to…" stories, innumerable SARS jokes, and much mocking of his Canadian accent, without complaint. If he wanted to spend the last evening of our vacation at a shooting range, I wasn't going to be an obstruction.

I *was* going to be a bit freaked out, mind you. I didn't know what to expect, and when we walked into the lobby of the shooting range and were greeted with shelves of ammunition, two display cases full of handguns, and a series of automatic weapons mounted on the wall behind the counter, I was ready to turn and run. But the boyfriend was all business, and before I had a chance to plan my escape he was chatting with the reassuringly diminutive young woman behind the counter and setting up his rental of an AK-47.

I, meanwhile, did my best not to hyperventilate as one of the male employees showed me a small cannon whose bullets, I was told, would break through a brick wall.

"Try not to look like a deer caught in headlights," my boyfriend whispered to me with a smile, as he took my hand and led me over to a table where he could fill out the many sheets of paperwork that were required before the kind folks at the range would turn over one of their automatic weapons to him.

"O.K.," I said. But my entire body shook with each muted "bang" that leaked through the thick glass and double doors separating the lobby from the shooting lanes. I suppose that's how the slim, white-haired man in the Army shirt knew I was scared. He came over and asked if I was planning to shoot. I told him I wasn't. He told me I should. I told him I wouldn't.

"It's your duty as a citizen," the man said.

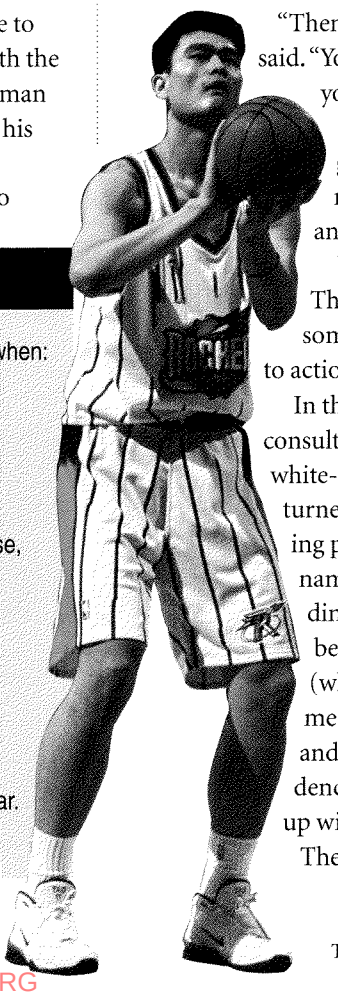
"I'm not a citizen," I said. "I'm Canadian."

"Then, you're right" he said. "You're not a citizen, you're a subject."

"What kind of gun would you recommend?" I answered.

What can I tell you? The truth hurts. But sometimes it leads us to action.

In the end, after much consultation with the white-haired man (who turned out to be a calming private instructor named Frank) and the diminutive woman behind the counter (who kindly warned me off the heavier guns and those with a tendency to recoil), I ended up with the 9mm Glock. Then, an immense man



QUOTE OF THE DAY

You know the world is going crazy when:

the best rapper is a white guy,

the best golfer is a black guy,

the tallest man in the NBA is Chinese,

the Swiss win the America's Cup in ocean sailing, the French are calling Americans arrogant,

and Germans don't want to go to war.

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named Fred led me through a thorough lesson on how to load, fire, clear, and handle the weapon without shooting my, or anyone else's, head off.

By the time I was settled into a lane, methodically observing Fred's safety rules, carefully aiming and firing at the paper target, taking calm instructions from Frank about smoothing out my trigger squeeze, I felt like a different person.

I was in control. I was able to respect the weapon in front of me without feeling terrified of it. And, for the first time in my entire life, I understood what it meant to hold the physical power to defend my small, 5'2" self against anyone who might threaten me or my rights. Well, anyone who didn't happen to be carrying one of those mini cannon things, anyway.

I am still not a gun nut. I doubt I ever will be. But I can now understand, on a gut rather than just an intellectual level, the liberating power of possessing the means and skill to protect oneself.

That is what makes Americans an especially privileged people, and, ultimately, what makes each one of them a citizen, not a subject.

—*Toronto lawyer* ***Marni Soupcoff*** *writes a column for TAEmag.com every Friday.*

QUACK WHACK

I know an Atlanta hospital that has more than its share of quacks. This is not to suggest a lack of expertise or dedication among the staff physicians. You see, the hospital houses the AFLAC Cancer Center and Blood Disorders Service for children. It and other pediatric oncology centers across the country benefit from the financial generosity of AFLAC, the Georgia insurance company whose commercials have made the duck with the raspy quack a national icon.

But not everyone is pleased to see the bird squawk "AFLAC" on national TV. Because the AFLAC duck is sometimes shown in treacherous situations in the commercials, such as falling into the Grand Canyon, or hanging upside down in a bat cave, the animal rights group United Poultry Concerns has cried foul. The hazardous scenes are obviously played by a robot duck, not a real one, but one UPC official with ruffled feathers has branded the commercials "degrading to ducks," and claimed that animal abuse could be fostered by them.

Even more berserk is the stand taken by UPC president Karen Davis. It is "specieist," she believes, to think that "the September 11 attack on the World Trade Center was a greater tragedy than what millions of chickens endured that day, and what they endure every day because they can't defend themselves against the concerted human appetites against them." She holds that the destruction of the Twin Towers "actually reduced the pain and suffering in the world, since 3,000 people would no longer be able to eat chickens."

"If it were up to me," Davis declares, "there would be no 'domestic' animals, by which I mean there would be no slavery, no animal property, no 'pets.' Other creatures would live their lives, raising their families, having their own projects." (Ms. Davis shares her Virginia home with more than 100 duck and chicken "companions.")

Meanwhile, the AFLAC duck is generating life-saving funds across the country. Sales by the company of stuffed ducks have raised more than $12 million to fight children's cancer. And animals with snowy white bodies and bright yellow beaks are hugged proudly every night by young patients at the AFLAC Center.

—**Tait Trussell** *watches America from Michigan.*

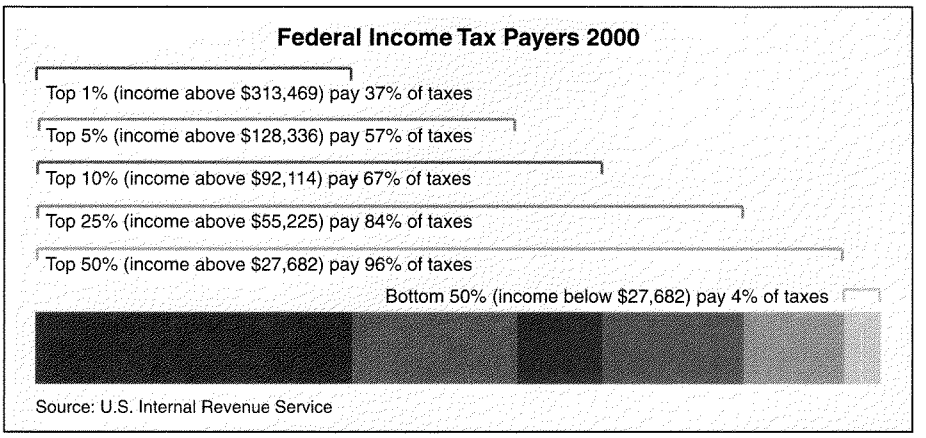
THE LIMITS OF TAXING "THE RICH"

"Soak the rich" rhetoric has been part of American political discourse for as long as I can remember. Democrats and liberals usually insist that the rich should pay more taxes. But the tax dilemma of California Governor Gray Davis shows there are practical limits to this strategy.

Governor Davis, of all people, recently called attention to the fact that the rich already pay most of the income taxes in California. And he noted that California's tax revenue has become extremely volatile precisely because the incomes of rich people fluctuate up and down a lot.

The state's treasury did very well during the dot-com boom, when California collected enormous taxes on capital gains and other investments. But this December, after he was safely re-elected, Davis began arguing that California needs a source of revenue that is not dependent on such volatile sources of income. We can't allow the welfare of the entire state to rely upon the fortunes of a handful of very rich people, he suggested.

You might ask why California needs more money. Unfortunately, Governor Davis spent the flood of tax revenue that came in during the dot-com boom—adding 44,494 new state employees to the payroll. Now that the incomes of the very



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rich have dropped off sharply with the stock market, Davis is frantic for new funds. (Cutting state government is barely on his radar screen.)

I was intrigued as to where a liberal Democrat like Davis might be going with his warning that pressing the rich harder wasn't the way to go. After all, at the very moment he said this, Democrats at the national level were attacking George Bush for being too easy on the wealthy.

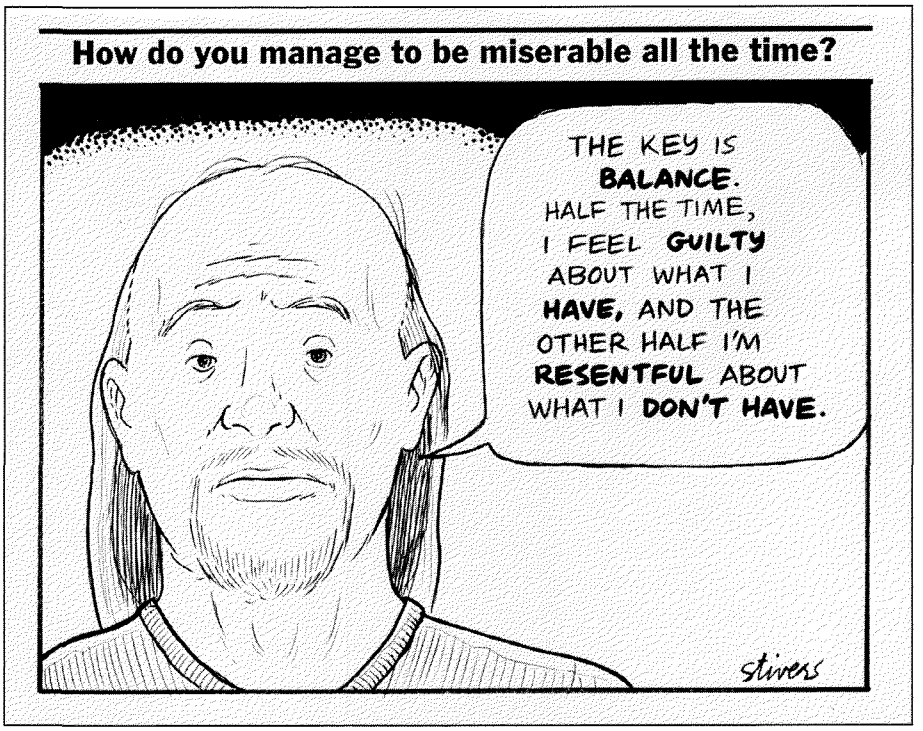
But the bare facts show what motivated Davis. Both in the state of California and at the federal level, the reality is that the rich pay the lion's share of taxes. In California, taxpayers with adjusted gross incomes over $100,000 make up the top 11 percent of taxpayers, yet this high-earning group paid 80 percent of the state's income taxes. Taxpayers with incomes over $500,000 account for less than 1 percent of total tax returns filed, but pay fully 40 percent of the personal income taxes remitted to the state. Tax returns at the federal level reveal a similar, though slightly less skewed, pattern. According to the Tax Foundation, the top 10 percent of U.S. payers contributed 67 percent of all federal personal income taxes. There's not a lot more that can be squeezed out of that stone.

If we already rely too much on the rich for government revenues, where does one go if he thinks (as Gray Davis does) that the government needs more money? Davis concluded he needed to tax everybody else more. He proposed an increase in the California sales tax, expected to raise $1.7 billion and a $4 billion increase in vehicle license fees. Both are broad levies paid by almost everybody.

So what went around has come around. In taxing rich people heavily to build government revenue, my state (and many others) hitched their wagons to the star of the wealthy. While the rich flourished, the states were flush, but when they fell back to earth, our government coffers dried up.

The truth is, there is a natural limit to "soaking the rich"—and California and other places may have just hit it.

—**Jennifer Roback Morse** *is a fellow of Stanford's Hoover Institution. An earlier version of this appeared in ToTheSource.*



LEFT CLERGY, RIGHT LAITY

The war in Iraq exposed many continuing fissures in U.S. society, but none more evident than the divide between clerics promoting a forgiving "God of Peace" and parishioners favoring a sterner "God of Justice."

Most mainline Christian faiths—the Roman Catholic Church, the Episcopal Church, the United Church of Christ, the United Methodists, and the National Council of Churches—adamantly opposed the war against Iraq from the outset. Like the secular left, liberal religious leaders denounced the conflict as one of U.S. aggression, likely to evolve into a long, bloody conflict. In contrast, most people in the pews strongly backed President Bush's goal of ousting Saddam Hussein. According to a prewar poll conducted by the Pew Research Center and Forum on Religion and Public Life, greater than 60 percent of mainline Protestants and Catholics favored attacking Iraq, along with more than 75 percent of evangelical Protestants.

Significantly, this gap between the ecclesiastic establishment and the laity extends beyond issues of war and peace to a wide range of social and political topics. Professor of religion Wade Roof traces the divide to changes in seminary training that began in the 1960s, which brought an increasingly leftward tilt to young clergy on issues ranging from race relations and economics to homosexuality and women's rights. As a result, the "gap between mainline religious beliefs and what the American people actually think has grown worse," says Roof.

An intellectual takeover by progressives within mainline churches pushed clergy beliefs well to the left of churchgoers, agrees Scott Appleby, a historian of the American Catholic Church and professor of history at Notre Dame. The sex-abuse scandals in the Catholic Church, Appleby says, have widened the gap between clergy and laity.

This may be one explanation for the inroads made by conservative evangelicals into such groups as Latinos. By 2010, a majority of American Catholics will be Latino, but their loyalty seems to be weak-

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ening. An estimated 600,000 Latinos leave the church every year; Catholic sociologist Andrew Greeley predicts that within a decade as many as half of all Latinos will be outside the Catholic fold. The exodus from the church may be even more pronounced among non-Latino Catholics. One factor driving the flow is what liberals like Appleby call "xenophobia" among American Catholics (others might call it patriotism). Many lay Catholics are put off by the church's increasingly internationalist and pacifist outlook.

Similar splits have developed among American Jews, traditionally among the most liberal and least pro-military groups in U.S. society. Like their Christian peers, many American rabbis have been raised and trained in the "progressive" tradition. Southern California Rabbi Ed Feinstein agrees that Jewish clergy tend to be "far to the left" of their congregants. The Iraq war, pushing many Jews toward the center, deepened this division.

Over time, the split between a liberally trained clergy and increasingly conservative laity are likely to accelerate religious fragmentation, at the expense of mainstream denominations. With the exception of the immigrant-fueled Catholic Church, membership in almost all mainstream faiths has either stagnated or declined in the last ten years. But strong membership gains have been made in more conservative churches, ranging from the Mormons to the Southern Baptists to various evangelical and charismatic churches. There has also been an upsurge in what Roof calls "experimental" religions, including New Age variants of Christianity.

—*Condensed from an article by* **Joel Kotkin** *and* **Karen Speicher** *of Pepperdine University, published in the* Los Angeles Times *May 11, 2003.*

ATHEISTS ON THE MARCH

The Godless March, the first of its kind, recently drew about 2,500 atheists to Washington in a concerted effort to form a political base. Marchers frequently compared themselves to the early women's and gay rights movement. Ellen Johnson, president of American Atheists and coordinator of the event, claimed that 14 percent of Americans have no religious affiliation, "but so many of us are in the closet."

Johnson announced the formation of a Godless Americans' political action committee to support atheist politicians. One issue that has activated atheists is government assistance to faith-based welfare organizations. Michael Newdow, the man who instigated the ruling last summer that the phrase "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance is un-Constitutional, was hailed as a hero at the march, and led the crowd in reciting the new "Godless" pledge.

According to Ron Barrier, spokesman for American Atheists, the Internet and new groups such as Campus Freethought Alliance have been instrumental in channeling young people into atheism. But it remains to be seen if atheism can grow and have much influence beyond its small core following—which is likely far below 14 percent of the population.

—**Richard Cimino** *is editor of religionwatch.com.*

ON POLITICAL MOMENTS

Retired Naval commander Lewis McIntyre sent us a copy of a letter he recently dispatched to Democratic Senator Robert Byrd. Some extracts:

Senator Byrd,

As a retired Naval officer, with two Gulf carrier deployments under my belt, I find your criticism of President Bush's visit to the *USS Lincoln* offensive in the extreme! This is the first time that the Commander in Chief took time out of his busy wartime schedule to pay a visit to thank those who served in the line of fire, in a way that was both dramatic and meaningful to those on the carrier. Perhaps if LBJ got off his fat behind to do something similar, our troops' morale in Vietnam might not have been so low.

As an officer I am extremely sensitive to styles of leadership. That is, after all, our stock in trade. And it was not lost on me that the President spent about 30 seconds shaking hands with the Admiral and other brass, and then spent the next 45 minutes putting himself at the disposal of the people who make that ship work: the yellow shirts, the green shirts, the purple shirts, the chiefs, the sailors. Not dressed out in formal uniform (I understand at Bush's request), but in their greasy, smelly, sweaty working uniforms. He put himself at their disposal. Nineteen- or 20-something-year-olds getting a picture of themselves with the President of the United States, his arm draped around their shoulder. That is a moment those kids a few years out of high school never dreamed would ever happen to them, maybe not even when they knew he was coming aboard.

And it was the most natural moment in the world. You might have thought it was a family reunion, and in a way it was. Bush is one of them. I understand from the pilots with him that he did a pretty good job at formation flying, tucked in close for a lead change. You can always tell a fighter pilot. Apparently even after 30 years it all comes back. Frankly, I would have liked to see him come aboard in an FA-18, but the Secret Service vetoed that, and Bush accepted their judgment. Again, a mark of a good leader.

Bush stands for the common man. While he is the most powerful leader on the planet right now, he hasn't lost his everyday touch. Was it a political moment? What moment of a President's life is NOT political? If you had spent some time in the service, you might understand the significance of that moment to all the men and women aboard the *Lincoln*, and indeed to all the men and women in the service who shared the experience vicariously.

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By Karl Zinsmeister and Eli Lehrer

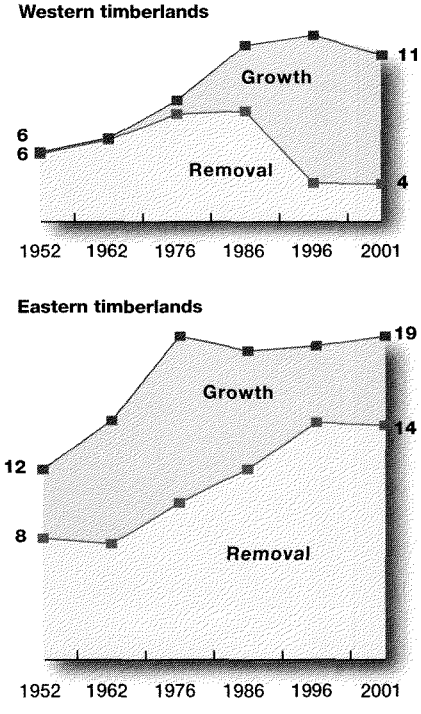
Indicators

DEEP WOODS

Many Americans believe that U.S. forests are declining, opinion polls show. This reflects gloomy rhetoric from the environmental movement. In truth, however, the U.S. has more acres of forest today than it did in 1920, or in 1990. Significantly more trees are planted each year in this country than die naturally or get harvested. And more land now reverts to forest annually than gets converted to urban uses.

During the Clinton administration, environmentalists pushed through a burst of regulations discouraging or banning timber harvesting on public land. This sharply decreased harvesting in America's western timberlands, which probably helped increase lumbering in the east. In any case, tree growth now far exceeds tree removal in both zones, as the two accompanying graphs show.

Tree growth and removal
(billions of cubic feet)



Source: *Index of Environmental Indicators, 2003*

BREATHE EASY

America's air has become a great deal cleaner over the last generation. Since measurement began in 1970, U.S. emissions have fallen dramatically, even while GDP and travel have more than doubled. America, in other words, is producing much more while polluting less.

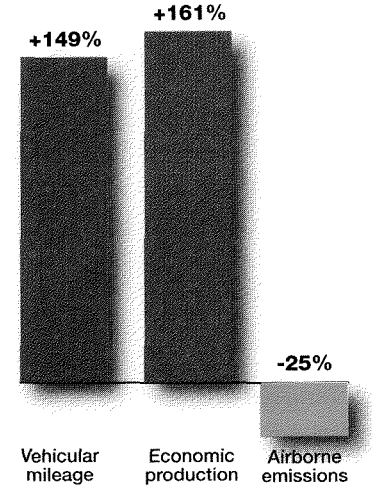
Ambient air pollution levels
(1976 – 2001)

Ozone	**– 33%**
Sulfur Dioxides	**– 67**
Nitrogen Dioxide	**– 42**
Carbon Monoxide	**– 73**
Particulates *	**– 27**
Lead	**– 97**

Note: * 1996–2001

Source: *Index of Environmental Indicators, 2003*

Production vs. pollution
1970 – 2000

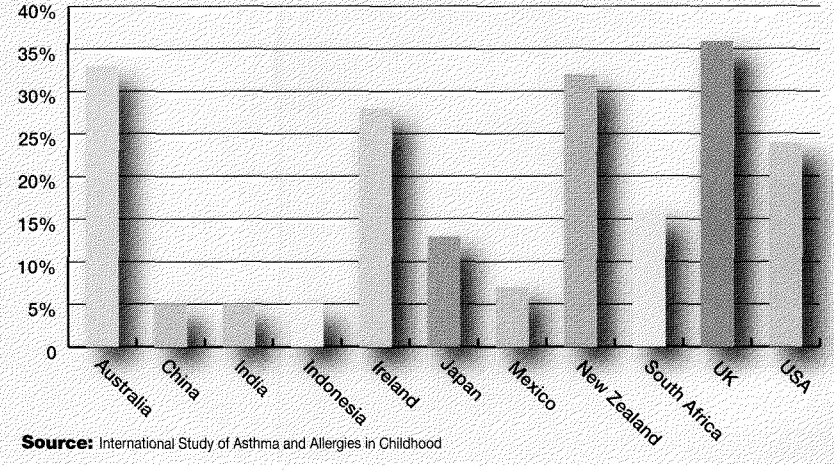


Source: *Index of Environmental Indicators, 2003*

FALSE ALARM

It is easy to misattribute problems to pollution that actually have other sources. For instance, environmental groups regularly claim that high and rising levels of asthma stem from air pollution. International comparisons cast severe doubt on this thesis. As the accompanying data show, highly polluted countries like Mexico, China, and India have relatively low levels of asthma. Meanwhile, countries like Australia and Ireland, which have even cleaner air than the United States, show high levels of asthma.

Percentage of population exhibiting asthma symptoms



Source: International Study of Asthma and Allergies in Childhood

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"Live" with TAE

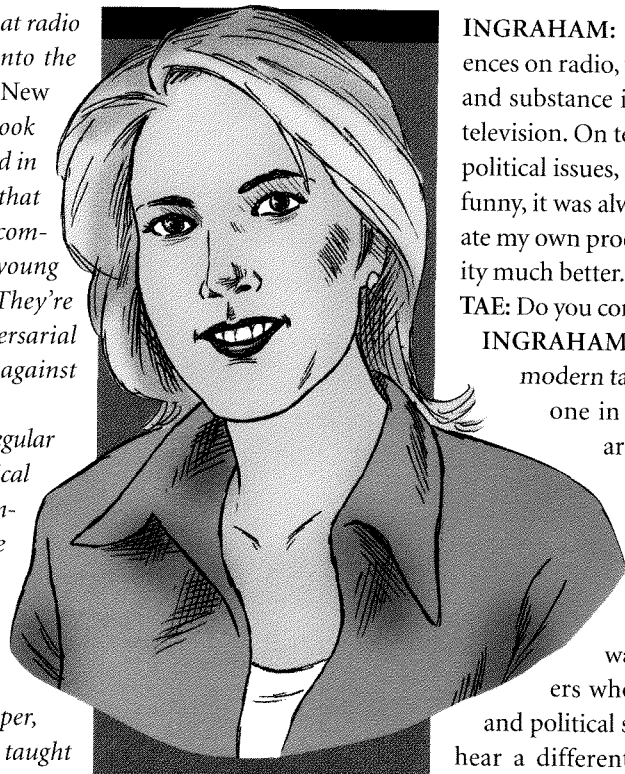
A rising talk radio phenomenon compares radio to TV, dissects culture and politics, contrasts elites vs. middle America, and explains why Hillary Clinton is a throwback.

Laura Ingraham

It was a little more than eight years ago that radio talk show host Laura Ingraham burst onto the national scene in a cover story for the New York Times Magazine. *The article—"Look Who's the 'Opinion Elite' Now"—appeared in the wake of the 1994 landslide elections that gave Republicans control of Congress. Accompanying profiles of Ingraham and other young activists on the right was the tag line: "They're young, brainy, and ambitious—an adversarial brand of conservatives winning the war against liberalism and having a grand old time."*

In the mid '90s, Ingraham became a regular commentator on a wide variety of political and cultural issues. She brought more credentials to the fray, however, than the average talking head. As a college student during the early 1980s at Dartmouth (where, the daughter of a waitress, she attended on scholarship), Ingraham was editor of the iconoclastic conservative campus newspaper, The Dartmouth Review. *"My years there taught me that real education wasn't just about hard work and good study habits," she says. "It was about critical thinking—challenging received ideas and conventional wisdom." The paper's guerilla journalism generated national publicity. After college, Ingraham went to the University of Virginia's law school. Following that, she clerked for Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas.*

After working for CBS News and MSNBC, Ingraham launched "The Laura Ingraham Show" in 2001, a three-hour daily radio broadcast syndicated coast to coast by Westwood One. She was interviewed for TAE *by associate editor John Meroney and writer Patricia Beauchamp.*



Middle Americans know that Hollywood and New York elites despise their values.

TAE: For years, you were highly visible as a television commentator. What made you want to go into radio?

INGRAHAM: I'd always enjoyed my experiences on radio, which allowed me to mix humor and substance in a way that's difficult to do on television. On television, I was concentrating on political issues, and if I wanted to do something funny, it was always a challenge. I wanted to create my own product, and radio fits my personality much better.

TAE: Do you consider Rush Limbaugh a mentor?

INGRAHAM: He's the one who created the modern talk radio phenomenon, so everyone in this business owes him. There are other conservative hosts such as Sean Hannity who are gathering steam, but Rush is still the standard bearer. When he came along, there was no one else like him. Rush Limbaugh was the outlet for so many listeners who were fed up with media bias and political spin, so it was very refreshing to hear a different angle and have it presented entertainingly.

TAE: How do you explain the success of "The Laura Ingraham Show"?

INGRAHAM: Westwood One took a chance on me, and I'm extremely fortunate. Maybe the fact that I don't limit myself to politics three hours a day, five days a week has helped define the show. Humor, music, culture, and politics all collide together. Anyone who sets out to be "the next Rush Limbaugh" is kidding himself. They broke the mold with Rush.

TAE: What's your sense of the typical talk radio caller?

INGRAHAM: Well, studies of the talk radio audience show that it's a group that votes in greater percentages than the general public. The people who listen read more magazines and newspapers than non-listeners, and they get

Illustration by Sam Toroide

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involved in their communities. They're not just passive listeners. They're passionate about issues. In other words, they don't fit the stereotype that people such as Tom Daschle would like the country to believe exists.

TAE: You've worked at CBS and MSNBC, so you're very familiar with television news. Do you believe the Fox News Channel puts a conservative spin on the news?

INGRAHAM: Fox skews to the right only compared to everything else on television. On any national political spectrum it's pretty moderate and fair.

TAE: In recent months there's been talk of creating a national radio talk show featuring a liberal personality, such as comedian Al Franken. But talk radio with liberal hosts just doesn't seem to work. New York governor Mario Cuomo tried it and failed. Jim Hightower failed. Why aren't liberals as successful as conservatives at radio broadcasting?

INGRAHAM: Because their guys tend to be too sanctimonious. They take themselves way too seriously. Most successful radio hosts poke fun at pomposity. For example, we roasted and satirized actress Jessica Lange when she said, while in Spain accepting a film award earlier this year, that "Military action is wrong, immoral, and basically illegal. It makes me feel ashamed to come from the United States. It's humiliating." Most Americans are outraged to hear someone as fortunate as Ms. Lange go overseas and make comments such as those. But if you're a liberal host, you feel compelled to defend them. Who's going to be the audience for someone who opens his show and says, "You know, Jessica Lange is making a very good point about the war"?

TAE: Television relies on the emotions of images. Talk radio, on the other hand, relies more on the logic of words. Having worked in both forums, do you see television as a more naturally liberal medium for this reason?

INGRAHAM: You may have a point there. Of course, the conventional view in celebrity journalism is that television is the flashier medium. Some people believe that if they're not on television then their lives must be over. I just laugh at that, and I'm sure Rush Limbaugh laughs at that, too. I also enjoy the fact that people can't say to those of us who are radio hosts that we're only on the air because of our looks—which is the rap on a lot of TV's talking airheads.

The press corps is dominated by people who are fundamentally at odds with the way average Americans think. NBC's first impulse was to defend Peter Arnett. If not for the public outcry, he'd still be in Baghdad.

In any case, the talk radio audience is in Nashville, Kansas City, Denver, Houston, and Dallas. There are very few people in those places who want to listen to Al Franken whine about how the U.S. ought to do what Kofi Annan says. Heartland America is smart, and they know that people such as Al Franken look at them as idiots. The kind of vibrant religiosity one finds in the heartland really bothers elites. They don't like people who support the Second Amendment, or people who passionately revere the flag. For some reason, elites believe that faith in the military is passé. And middle Americans know that Hollywood and New York elites despise their values.

TAE: You went to Dartmouth College and law school at the University of Virginia. You clerked for a Supreme Court justice, and worked in one of the country's top law firms. You've been a broadcaster on CBS and MSNBC. You live in Washington, D.C., and have a radio show in more than two hundred markets. Aren't you a member of the elite?

INGRAHAM: Elite is a state of mind. It doesn't mean working in a particular profession, living in a special place, or making a certain amount of money. When I talk about the elite in New York and Hollywood I'm talking about people who believe that America's traditional values are a thing of the past. The part of America outside their orbit is considered ignorable, merely fly-over country.

TAE: Are liberal elites just different from more typical Americans, or do they actually have contempt for the rest of the country?

INGRAHAM: Especially when it comes to culture, the elite mindset says "our choices are better than yours." But there are different degrees. Peter Jennings conveys that he's superior to the rest of us. By contrast, Tom Brokaw seems to understand what America's all about. If you're rich, it doesn't mean you're an elite. George W. Bush is rich, and he's from a well-connected family, but the last thing I would say about him is that he considers himself part of an elite. Even though Bill Clinton is from Arkansas and grew up fairly modestly, he's much more in the elite than George W. Bush is. Elites feel they need to lead the rest of us to the promised land of a modern-day utopia.

I appreciate, respect, and gravitate more

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toward the middle of America. The reason I live in Washington, D.C. is because of my job. When Senator John Kerry, running for President, says things such as, "I hate going to places like Dubuque to raise large sums of money—I hate it, I detest it," the sense that most people get is that Senator Kerry considers these places as mere pass-through states.

TAE: How do you make people with this mindset reconsider their view?

INGRAHAM: I tease them. For the most part, there's no converting them. Liberal elites are often extremely trendy, which is amusing, because they insist it's the American public who are a bunch of sheep. The truth is that the supposedly enlightened ones are the real sheep—they're the ones who are following the latest bumper-sticker mentality. If you scratch the surface of Barbra Streisand's or Susan Sarandon's views, there is little inner core to them. The biggest echo chamber around is the Hollywood echo chamber; they all just repeat what those around them are saying.

This isn't always a difference of liberals and conservatives, by the way. For example, I would put the writers who work on the *Wall Street Journal's* editorial page in the category of the elites when they're addressing issues such as immigration. They're opposed to restrictions on immigration, arguing that the market should always win, even above the rule of law, whereas most Americans believe in enforcing the laws, and in the idea of having one American culture.

TAE: You've said that this year's Oscar night presented a perfect example of the contrast of the two Americas.

INGRAHAM: Think about it: On one channel, there were our brave military men and women, donning chemical suits, in harm's way. Then, on ABC, there were the Academy Award nominees and winners, air-kissing one another for their great artistic sacrifices, clutching their $25,000 gift bags, decked out in couture and plastic surgery. The closest these people ever come to an MRE is a take-out order of capellini with white truffles from the Ivy.

Even amidst news that American prisoners of war were being taunted before Iraqi television cameras, ABC TV executives and Oscar officials decided that toning down the red carpet was an adequate sacrifice. Wolfgang Puck, the chef mogul who was in charge of catering the big after-party, wailed that if the Oscars were cancelled hundreds of pounds of imported sea bass would go to waste.

A lot of pop culture today is way beyond aggravating, but rather than carp all the time I try to tell people about the artists who really are worth watching.

But guess what happened? Ratings for the Academy Awards were down almost 25 percent from last year's show. Americans were emotionally and physically elsewhere.

TAE: NBC News fired journalist Peter Arnett after he gave an interview to Iraqi television wherein he was critical of U.S. war efforts. Do you believe Arnett is guilty of treason?

INGRAHAM: The fact that he would give an interview like that isn't a big surprise to most conservatives. Arnett is just like the majority of his media peers—they never wanted our country to go to war, never believed in the cause, and never trusted President Bush's intentions.

But it was one thing for someone such as actor Sean Penn to be used as an Iraqi propaganda tool. A journalist supposedly reporting for an American news outlet is supposed to be more responsible. I'm certain many of the families of servicemen would describe his actions as treasonous.

What the Peter Arnett story shows is that the press corps is dominated by people who are fundamentally at odds with the way average, hard-working Americans think. NBC's first impulse was to defend Arnett, saying he'd given the interview to the Iraqis as something of a professional courtesy, and that he was merely analyzing the war. If the public outcry hadn't been so overwhelming, I believe NBC News would have been content to keep Peter Arnett as its eyes and ears in Baghdad.

TAE: He didn't exactly have the best track record going in.

INGRAHAM: Look, this is a guy who was fired by CNN because he filed a bogus report charging American forces with using sarin nerve gas on a Laotian village in 1970 to kill U.S. defectors. But this apparently didn't matter to NBC News or *National Geographic*, Arnett's main employer. Both of them jumped at the chance to showcase Mr. Arnett, who of course had also been fawned over by the Pulitzer Prize jury.

TAE: What do you think of today's movies?

INGRAHAM: I'm not one to argue that it's all garbage. Conservatives make a big mistake when they trash everything that comes out in film and music. M. Night Shyamalan, who directed *Signs*,

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Unbreakable, and *The Sixth Sense* [see *TAE*'s feature on Shyamalan in our April/May issue], and Spike Jonze, who was behind *Adaptation* and *Being John Malkovich,* are very talented filmmakers. Mel Gibson is being very brave right now making a picture about Christ's crucifixion. A lot of pop culture today is way beyond aggravating, but rather than carp all the time I try to tell people about the artists who really are worth watching.

TAE: You've said on the radio that you liked the film *About Schmidt,* which starred Jack Nicholson as a retired actuary from Nebraska. But that picture seems to be a slam against the Middle America that you champion.

INGRAHAM: I know. In Louis Begley's novel, Schmidt comes from Long Island. But the filmmaker, Alexander Payne, made him a Nebraskan. That's typical Hollywood. Nicholson's performance, however, was superb, and that's what I liked.

TAE: What's one of the best things to come out of your experience as editor of *The Dartmouth Review*?

INGRAHAM: It gave me an appreciation for how important humor is in politics and political commentary. The *Review* was very irreverent, and it was definitely politically incorrect before anyone even knew what political correctness was. I can see some of the satires I wrote back then coming through in my radio program, like the contest we have going called "Name That War." North Korea is currently "Get Shorty."

TAE: So you write many of your show's parodies yourself?

INGRAHAM: Yes. You see, the staff of "The Laura Ingraham Show" is huge—two people! Lee Habeeb, whom I went to law school with, is on the air with me and produces the show. A man called Kevin Delany, who produced Larry King's radio program, is also one of the producers. Then there's me, the host.

TAE: Who have been some of your best guests, in terms of intelligence and humor?

INGRAHAM: Among entertainers, probably someone like Darrell Hammond of "Saturday Night Live." He's a regular with us, and he's excellent. Rich Eisen, a commentator on ESPN, is hysterical. Sometimes we have a hard time getting political writers and policy experts to loosen up. One of the most hysterical exchanges I've had is with Maya Jones, who represents an anti-war group called Not In Our Name. I tried to debate her, and she said, "You really should tell people who are coming on if you're not going to agree with them. I came on to promote the anti-war march, and I only have a few more minutes left." She finally hung up on us. You'd think a member of an anti-war group would do some political homework before coming on a national radio program.

TAE: In your book *The Hillary Trap: Looking for Power in All the Wrong Places,* which is a rebuke of Hillary Clinton-style feminism, you write that your mother was more of a modern woman than Senator Clinton could ever hope to be. What do you mean?

INGRAHAM: My mother grew up dirt poor during the Depression. She was 14 when her mother died, and she didn't have the money to go to college so she took a job in the local thread factory. She raised four children on little money. She was a waitress for 25 years. Like Hillary Clinton, she stayed in an unhappy marriage, but back in those days there weren't many alternatives. My mother could have played the victim and blamed the world, but instead she persevered with the talents and skills she had. She taught me how to stand on my own, fight for myself, and defend my principles. She had independence, inner strength, and believed in taking personal responsibility for mistakes.

TAE: In fact, you believe that Senator Clinton has probably set women's progress back.

INGRAHAM: Of course she has. What do we admire her for? Her independence? For bringing back a Neanderthal tolerance for the extramarital shenanigans of married men? Some commentators have said she's Bill Clinton's "enabler." Whatever you call this behavior it's a big step backward. Hillary has succeeded in making the country safer for infidelity by letting her husband get away with cheating over and over. For decades she's leached on a philandering husband and on promises of an ever-bigger government—so in that sense she's really a throwback to the tradition of women living off of sugar daddies.

TAE: Talk radio tends to be a heavily male industry, while TV news shows are much more likely to be produced by and oriented toward women. Why is this?

INGRAHAM: I'm not really sure. Perhaps it's because men tend to be more interested in politics as a general matter. I think I hook some women just because they're unaccustomed to hearing a female voice on radio.

TAE: Ann Coulter has been very successful as a political commentator in a niche similar to yours. Do you consider her to be a competitor?

INGRAHAM: I think she's fantastic. Ann isn't intimidated by anything. She's carved out a great position for herself as a best-selling author. Ann and I have known each other for many years, been skiing together, and laugh about the "rivalry" nonsense. This is a big world, and I'm just glad more strong women are out there in the mix.

TAE: You played sports in college. How did that experience influence you?

INGRAHAM: I miss team sports and all the bonding that comes with them. Field hockey and softball were great for that. Plus I was always a competitor, and I think that helps in every part of your life. Being in the athletic habit also helps me keep in shape. I sometimes challenge wimpy men who come on my show to a pull-up contest. I can do seven, which would beat lots of them.

TAE: You give the impression of genuinely enjoying yourself during your broadcasts. Is this a fun job, or is it just work?

INGRAHAM: I left the law because for me it was "just work." My radio show is work that also happens to be a total blast. Where else can I get that?

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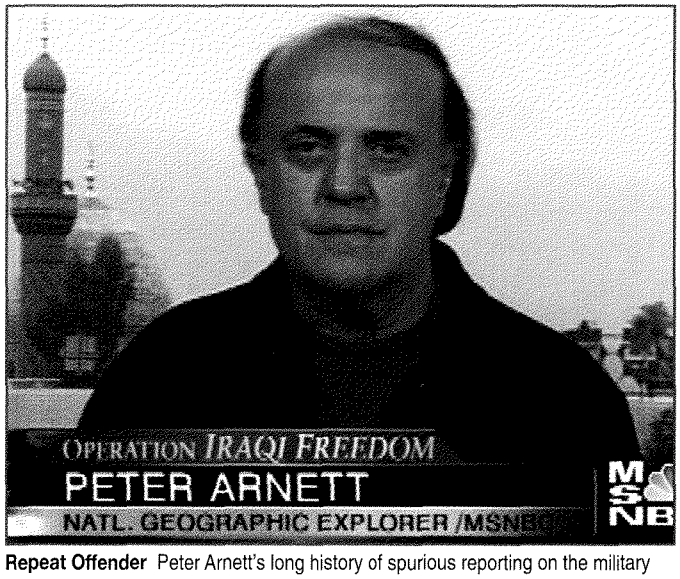
Doubt and Derision Over Baghdad

By Karina Rollins with assistance from the Media Research Center



Newscom.com

Repeat Offender Peter Arnett's long history of spurious reporting on the military didn't prevent him from ending up on TV again as a supposed expert. This time he filed false reports of American cluster bomb use, and went on Iraqi TV to criticize the U.S. military and President and praise the Iraqi army.

"There are laws to protect the freedom of the press's speech, but none...to protect the people from the press." —Mark Twain

Our nation is still catching its breath after the 24-hour, seven-day-a-week, commercial-free, embedded, reported, re-reported, questioned, analyzed, parroted media frenzy that was the coverage of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Never in the world's history has the combination of technology and reporters at the front lines brought war so vividly into our living rooms. In retrospect, how was the American public served by the correspondents, anchormen, columnists, pundits, and "embeds" who had the job of describing the fight in Iraq?

Let's start with TV. The Media Research Center (MRC), whose staff studies such matters for a living, concludes that, on the whole, "reports from embedded journalists were refreshingly factual and were mostly devoid of commentary." Yet back in the studios, "television's war coverage was plagued by the same problems detected during previous conflicts: too little skepticism of enemy propaganda, too much mindless negativism about America's military prospects, and a reluctance on the part of most networks to challenge the premises of the anti-war movement."

MRC analysts took in virtually every second of the TV war coverage and issued a report card on the major channels. ABC scored the worst by far, with a grade of D-. "ABC's reporters presented the most adversarial and negative coverage of the American war effort." Their man in Baghdad, Richard Engel,

Karina Rollins is a TAE *senior editor. Special thanks to Brent Baker, Rich Noyes, Tim Jones, and Clay Waters at the Media Research Center for providing archived material and analysis.*

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"did the most to play up Iraqi claims of civilian suffering at the hands of Americans." Ted Koppel was dreadful—"the rare embedded journalist who spent his time lecturing and pontificating instead of recounting the historic events that surrounded him," as the MRC summarizes. On the very first day of the war, as his unit pushed into enemy territory and battle swirled around him, Koppel chose not to describe what he was witnessing but to opine to Peter Jennings: "We ought to take note of the significance of what is happening here because this is an invasion that in this particular case, of course, was not prompted by an invasion of the United States. I know that members of the administration have been creating a tenuous linkage between al-Qaeda and the Iraqis so that there is that linkage between 9/11 and what's happening here now…" and on and on.

The media were guilty of gross impatience, launching accusations of a military stall-out after just a few days.

Jennings, ABC's anchor, got a flat F. "More than any other anchor," reports the MRC, he "zeroed in on purported weaknesses and failings in the U.S. effort to win support among liberated Iraqis." On the March 22 edition of "World News Tonight," for instance, Jennings disparaged Iraqi pro-American celebrations of the day before: "Yesterday we saw images of a jubilant reception in the southern Iraqi town of Safwan where soldiers stood by as people tore down a picture of Saddam Hussein and jumped in the streets, at least for the cameras." For the cameras? Why would Iraqis fake their celebrations?

Strangely, Jennings never questioned the sincerity of pro-Saddam rallies which took place under the eye of the *fedayeen.* This despite reports by John Quinones, one of ABC's own reporters, that many of the participants were coerced. He taped a teacher stating, "we were forced to say it. We were, we were obliged to do.... If we don't do it, we're killed or arrested or destroyed."

On April 9, the day that statues of Saddam Hussein fell across Iraq, Peter Jennings gave his most bizarre commentary yet. Either out of utter detachment from reality, vapidness of mind, or a willful attempt to put a damper on the party, he said this during live coverage:

> Saddam Hussein may have been, or may be, a vain man, but he has allowed himself to be sculpted heavy and thin, overweight and in shape, in every imaginable costume—both national, in historic terms, in Iraqi historic terms—in contemporary, in every imaginable uniform, on every noble horse. The sculpting of Saddam Hussein, which has been a growth industry for 20 years, may well be a dying art. A man named Natik al-Alusi [phonetic spelling] was one of the principal sculptors, and he was doing a new sculpture for the Ministry of Electricity even as this war was beginning.

The thoughtful Mr. Jennings was also, according to the MRC, the newsperson "most indulgent of the [anti-war] movement, offering uncritical coverage." On March 21, Jennings spent most of an hour-long show promoting activists, including a Jordanian man who wishes to attack America, and long interviews with organizers of far-left protest groups which Jennings failed to label politically. Instead, he tossed protestors softballs like: 'Why do you feel so strongly about this war?'" Throughout, anti-war activists were characterized (inaccurately) as politically and demographically typical Americans. Meanwhile, ABC's "World News Tonight" completely ignored a support-the-troops rally held in New York City on April 10 that attracted 15,000 participants.

CNN, which received a C+ from the MRC for its war coverage, was also far from neutral in its treatment of anti-war sentiment. Though it dedicated a reporter, Maria Hinojosa, to the anti-war protests, CNN's coverage was skin deep. Not once did the network mention to viewers that the primary sponsor of the anti-war marches was ANSWER, an arm of the communist Workers World Party. Nor was any of the extreme rhetoric used by many of the protest speakers shown on CNN. In 38 different stories about street demonstrations, only once did CNN mention that, according to polls, only a small minority of Americans showed such anti-war sentiments.

CBS received a B- on the MRC report card. "CBS's lowest point came before the war, when [Dan Rather] traveled to Baghdad for a softball interview with Saddam, asking the man who had killed thousands of his own people, 'What are the chances this is the last time you and I will see each other?'" But CBS provided war coverage "far superior to ABC, with much less gloomy speculation and a greater emphasis on factually reporting battlefield developments; day after day CBS's Pentagon reporter David Martin gave the most accurate overview of the war's progress." And Dan Rather redeemed himself by offering accurate reporting on the rapid U.S. drive to Baghdad, in stark contrast to the inaccurate pessimism of Jennings.

Fox News Channel received the best grade, a B+. The idea, proclaimed by many media elites, that "objective" war reporting demands an indifference to American success or failure was not in evidence at Fox.

Skewed, inaccurate, and misleading reporting seeped into the entire spectrum of mainstream media reporting on the Iraq war, even among well-intentioned reporters and anchors who were not trying to promote an agenda. The consciousness at today's major media outlets is now deeply tinted with an eagerness to believe the worst about the United States government and its actions. The benefit of the doubt is easily given to critics of the U.S. The backgrounds or subsequent developments of accusatory stories are too often left unchecked. Tidbits of emotional claims and half-facts often pass for complete reporting. Liberal conventional wisdom is repeated, unquestioned, as fact.

Take, for instance, the fervid reports of Iraqi civilian deaths and humanitarian disasters, especially water shortages. There was no sensible recognition in the media that temporary disruption of services is not an undue price to pay for a transition to free government. Nor was there any hint that Iraq's squalor might predate the arrival of Americans. On March 28, the *New*

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York Times's Felicity Barringer writes foreboddingly that "Iraqi civilian casualties mounted and the disruption of electrical, water, and sewage systems in Iraq's southern cities continued..." No evidence whatever is offered to document the claim of mounting damage. The possibility that what she was seeing was simple Third World misery or Saddam-friendly sabotage and not coalition-caused collateral damage apparently never crossed her mind.

Facts were blown out of proportion through constant repetition, to the point where the impression communicated had little connection to reality.

Over on ABC, reporter John Donvan breathlessly declared that "a million people live in Basra, hundreds of thousands of them have been without clean water for five days.... The possible consequence: cholera for a start, also diarrhea, which in Iraq often kills young children." A more inquisitive reporter on CBS, Scott Pelley, found that the water had been turned off well before the war started.

Many journalists lapse into defeatist rhetoric any time it comes to war simply out of naivete or carelessness. On March 25, just five days into the war, CBS anchorwoman Lesley Stahl slipped quite naturally into that favorite media analogy for quagmire: Vietnam. "You fought in Vietnam," she said to a veteran on "48 Hours." "Are you getting any feelings of déjà vu"?

Brian Williams (B-) of NBC/MSNBC (C+), as he narrated video of bombings in Baghdad on the first full day of the war, stated: "That vista on the lower left looks like Dresden, it looks like some of the firebombing of Japanese cities during World War II." Dresden, of course, was nearly completely destroyed in 1945, while in Baghdad, individual government buildings were targeted and hit with such precision that the lights remained on in neighboring structures, and Iraqis stood by and watched, knowing there was little reason to flee the city. (To his credit, Williams reversed his misanalogy about two weeks later, stating on the April 2 "Nightly News": "The fire bombings of Dresden and Tokyo in World War II were meant to kill civilians and then terrorize survivors. Here we've seen the opposite happen.")

Then there is the problem of proportion. Often our media started with true facts, then blew them out of proportion through constant repetition or exaggeration, to the point that the resulting impression had little connection to reality. The most obvious example is the media treatment of looting by Iraqi civilians after their cities were liberated. The TV networks went wild, showing and re-showing the same pictures of Iraqis carrying away chairs and lamps for days on end. "Chaotic conditions in the capital city as looters run wild" announced Fox's John Gibson. Print reporters were just as obsessed, often sounding as if the day-after thievery made Iraq's liberation from Saddam Hussein not worth the side effects.

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld commented: "It's the same pictures of the same person walking out of some building with a vase. And you see it 20 times. And you think, 'My goodness, were there that many vases...in the country?"

David Zurawik, television critic at the *Baltimore Sun*, observed that it's "understandable that all-news cable channels would jump on this narrative to the degree that they have—it's filled with the kind of conflict and disruption of order that makes for instant drama." But television news needs to be more than an entertainment drama, he warns; "responsibility comes with the privilege of covering news."

Military historian Victor Davis Hanson puts a darker face on the hype and instant gratification that is TV news. "Rather than trying to digest and analyze the tempo of battle," he says, "our vulture pundits instead regurgitate rumor and buzz." "Casualties, POWs, and skyrocketing costs blanket the airwaves," complained Hanson on March 28. "Rarely mentioned is the simple military fact that in a single week, a resolute American pincer column has driven across Iraq and is now systematically surrounding Baghdad—and with far fewer killed than were lost in a single day in Lebanon.... In just a week, the United States military has surrounded one of history's most sadistic and nasty regimes. It has overrun 80 percent of the countryside and has daily pulverized the Republican Guard, achieving more in five days than the Iranians did in eight years." Alas, these sorts of deeper lessons are rarely acknowledged in superficial daily news coverage.

And it wasn't just television that went overboard on some stories while missing others. Media outlets of all sorts lamented, day after day, that the Iraqi museum and library thefts essentially wiped out a whole era of civilization's history, never to be seen again. This was quickly shown to be a gross distortion and even falsehood, but few in the media have forthrightly acknowledged their error.

Wall Street Journal reporter Yaroslav Trofimov was the first one to check beneath the surface of the hysterical museum-looting story and discover that the "catastrophic" losses

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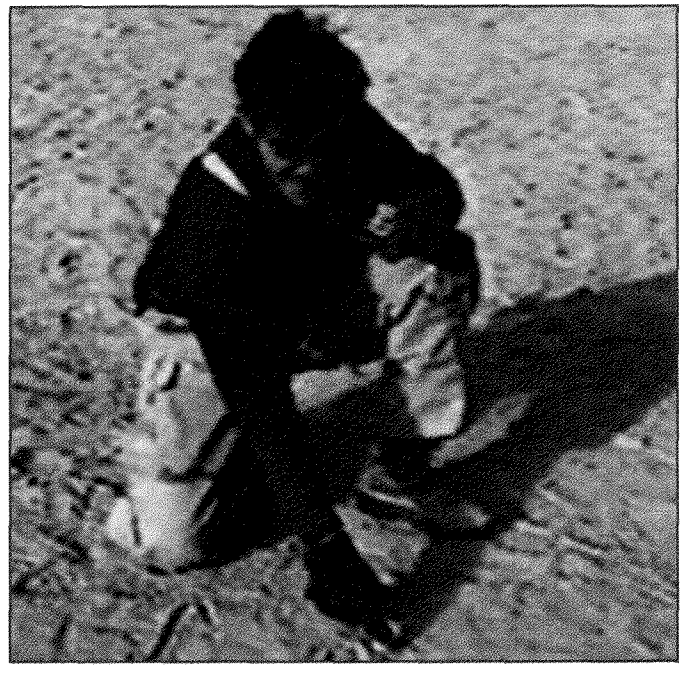
announced by low-level employees and academics outside the country, then trumpeted by media Chicken Littles, were erroneous. The reports grew out of a lack of understanding about what had been done in the museum before hostilities broke out. On April 17, Trofimov revealed that: "Thanks to Iraqi preparations before the war, it seems the worst has been avoided. Donny George, the director-general of restoration at the Iraqi Antiquities department...said his staff had preserved the museum's most important treasures, including the king's graves of Ur and the Assyrian bulls. These objects were hidden in vaults that haven't been violated by looters."

The newest report, with facts that even made it onto the front page of the *New York Times*, informs the public that the original, blindly accepted, number of vanished items—170,000—had been revised to all of 29; that's an original misestimate of 169,971. You can't expect anyone to know the exact number right from the beginning. Of course, as the *Weekly Standard* notes, if 170,000 items disappeared in 48 hours, as claimed, "that's more than 3,500 artifacts an hour—an astonishing rate of theft that probably should have been flagged by a copy editor." Oh, and four of those 29 actual missing pieces have been recovered since then.

In addition to spreading misinformation, the media were guilty of gross impatience, accusing the government of misleading the public about the length of the war, after only a few days. And the issue that seemed to provoke the most media sneering was the suggestion that American soldiers would be welcomed by Iraqi civilians as liberators. "An arrogant blunder for the ages" is how *Newsweek* described that idea when it was voiced by Vice President Dick Cheney. "The danger for Mr. Bush is that he will win the war, eventually, and unpleasantly," droned Quentin Peel of the *Financial Times*, "but he will never be seen as a liberator." On ABC's "Good Morning America," the well-meaning Diane Sawyer asked "What happened to the flowers expected to be tossed the way of Americans? Was it a terrible miscalculation?" Within days we observed that it wasn't a miscalculation at all, but lacking all patience and willingness to let events unfold, the media failed to see what was coming.

TV host and columnist Chris Matthews spoke for other gloomy types in the media when he predicted in the *San Francisco Chronicle* on August 25, 2002 that "This invasion of Iraq, if it goes off, will join the Bay of Pigs, Vietnam, Desert One, and Somalia in the history of military catastrophes." In reality, most aspects of the war were breathtakingly successful. As Greg Easterbrook points out in *The New Republic*, "all the promises of decisive, low-casualty action were fulfilled. Think of all the things that were supposed to happen and did: Highly accurate smart-bomb strikes with very few aircraft losses and few accidental hits of civilian targets. Expected, happened.... Complete dominance of Iraqi armor by U.S. armor. Expected, happened.... Large-scale surrender of Iraqi units. Expected, happened.... U.S. soldiers cheered by civilians. Expected, happened.... Exemplary honor displayed by U.S. and British forces. Expected, happened.... Avoidance of destruction of infrastructure needed by the average Iraqi, such as power plants and bridges. Expected, happened...."

Few of these achievements were highlighted in the major



Bring in the Clowns Geraldo Rivera showed up late and unprepared, sweet-talked his way into an embedded media position, and promptly started drawing maps of his unit's current position and future plans on live TV, endangering American soldiers.

press, however. Consider the following sample of news (not editorial) headlines from the *New York Times*.

- U.S. Bombs Ravage Targets in Baghdad (March 22)
- Baghdad Bombing Brings Back Memories of 9/11 (March 22)
- Even Some of Hussein's Arab Foes Take a Certain Pride in His Fight (March 26)

On March 27, the *Times* characterized the ghastly Iraqi fighting strategy of hiding behind and killing their own civilians this way: "Urban Warfare: Long a Key Part of an Underdog's Down-to-Earth Arsenal." On March 24, the *Los Angeles Times* put this on the front-page: "Iraqis Show New Defiance: Word of U.S. and British setbacks rekindles hope, determination among those in the capital" (as if most Iraqis were hoping that the killer Baathist regime would continue in place).

Not just the *Times*es of New York and L.A., which are now widely recognized as left-wing publications, but also the more moderate *Washington Post* and *Wall Street Journal* chimed in with doomsday predictions that relied largely on vague, unverifiable sources. We were told by these papers that "top Army officers in Iraq say they now believe that they effectively need to restart the war." Unnamed officers were claimed to be "privately" worrying about the progress of the war. Anonymous military officials ripping Donald Rumsfeld were alleged to abound.

"Does Operation Iraqi Freedom risk blowing up into a Middle East War? That scenario, once very remote, is no longer unthinkable," fretted *Newsweek* a week and a half into the fighting. Then came this cartoonish alarmism. "Some neoconservative hawks might even wish a wider war ('On to Damascus!'); more-restrained Bush administration officials dread an inflamed 'Arab Street' turning on its pro-U.S. governments—a

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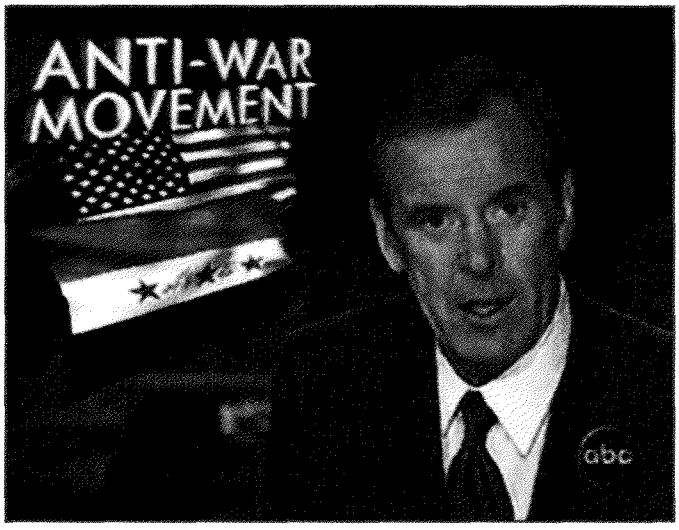

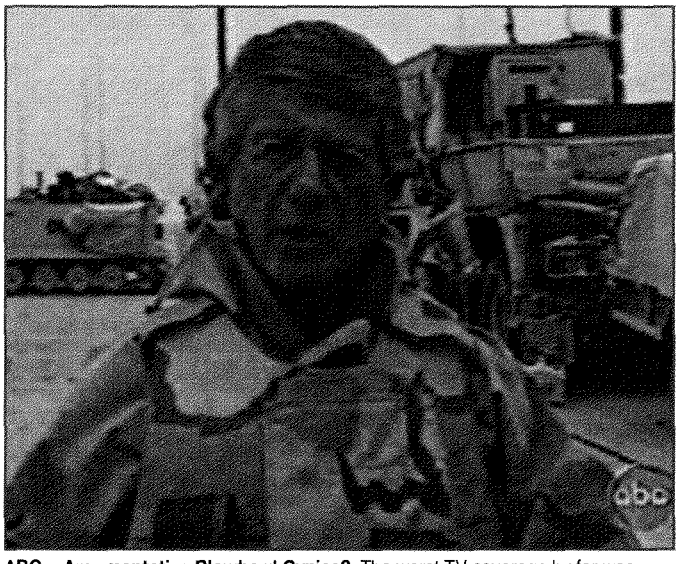

ABC = Argumentative Blowhard Cynics? The worst TV coverage by far was provided by ABC. Peter Jennings second-guessed every U.S. military move and pitched softballs to anti-war activists. Ted Koppel was a pretentious embed more interested in offering his opinions than reporting on the war around him.

conflagration that could force regime change in, say, Amman, Jordan, before Baghdad. Barring a sudden collapse of the Baathist regime—still a possibility, senior administration officials insist—the war in Iraq is about to get bloodier. Saddam's regime is doomed, almost certainly. But at what cost?"

Barely two weeks after that hyperventilating prose hit newsstands, the cost was in: The lowest human toll of any war ever fought in the history of the world. But why be a stickler about accuracy when the rhetoric can be this juicy?

An egregious case of media misrepresentation—and the single most vile example illustrating the seriousness of Mark Twain's worry about the need to protect the public from the media—is CNN's now famous post-invasion confession of its complicity with Saddam's regime. On April 10, CNN chief news executive Eason Jordan admitted that his network purposely failed, over a period of years, to report things like Saddam's kidnapping and torture of an Iraqi cameraman working for CNN, attempts by Iraqi officials to kill Westerners in northern Iraq, or the fact that even high officials within Saddam's own government were privately telling Jordan that the dictator was a "maniac who had to be removed."

CNN's motivation for withholding this type of information from the public during the critical global debates on whether Saddam was truly a menace? A naked desire to keep its privileged access in Baghdad, which might evaporate if it blew the whistle on Saddam. Mr. Jordan offered sanctimonious rhetoric about hiding the truth in order to protect innocent people, saying the network "had to worry that our reporting might endanger Iraqis." He wrote in the April 11 *New York Times*:

> CNN could not report that Saddam Hussein's eldest son, Uday, told me in 1995 that he intended to assassinate two of his brothers-in-law who had defected, and also the man giving them asylum, King Hussein of Jordan. It we had gone with the story, I was sure he would have responded by killing the Iraqi translator who was the only other participant in the meeting. After all, secret police brutalized even senior officials of the Information Ministry, just to keep them in line (one such official has long been missing all his fingernails). One Foreign Ministry officer told me of a colleague who, finding out his brother had been executed by the regime, was forced, as a test of loyalty, to write a letter of congratulations on the act to Saddam Hussein. An aide to Uday once told me why he had no front teeth: Henchmen had ripped them out with pliers and told him never to wear dentures, so he would always remember the price to be paid for upsetting his boss.

The CNN head's reaction to these sorts of discoveries over a period of years? "We could not broadcast anything these men said to us." Apparently CNN didn't consider the option of just closing its Baghdad office and withdrawing its employees so it could be free to report the truth about Saddam's lethality—a truth the world needed to know. CNN was more interested in protecting its ratings and position in the media pecking order—and shamelessly continues to promote itself as "The Most Trusted Name in News."

Beyond the shallow reporting, the knee-jerk negativity, and the information manipulated for the sake of ratings, there was the occasional direct act of malice during this war. *National Geographic Explorer's* Peter Arnett, appearing frequently on NBC and MSNBC, presented stories that were simply false, through and through. On March 26, he told Matt Lauer on the "Today" show that the U.S. military was using cluster bombs on civilian targets in Baghdad: "Residents said that 11 o'clock this morning, local time, two missiles came in, exploded, and the first journalists there earlier said they counted 15 corpses.... Later the information minister, Mr. al-Sahaf, complained that the U.S. has started using cluster bombs in the Baghdad area." An hour later, Arnett repeated the claim from the Iraqi information minister—Mister "There are no Americans in Baghdad"—about "cluster bombs," without any skepticism or doubt. Finally, NBC summoned its Pentagon correspondent, who suggested that "It would be very unusual if, in fact, cluster bombs were used inside Baghdad. And if you look at the pictures...a cluster bomb would create a Swiss-

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cheese effect, thousands and thousands of holes in the target, and we don't see that."

More famously, Arnett went on Iraqi television to claim that "within the United States, there is growing challenge to President Bush about the conduct of the war and also opposition to the war." He proclaimed the U.S. war a "failure" and praised the "determination" of the Iraqi army. When public outrage boiled over, Arnett was finally fired by *National Geographic* and dropped from NBC/MSNBC.

In another controversial incident, *Los Angeles Times* photographer Brian Walski combined two photos into one—creating an image of an armed British soldier taking a confrontational stance toward an Iraqi man carrying a small child. The two shots from which he made his doctored image were taken while the soldier was warning Iraqi civilians to take protective cover from Iraqi fire. The faked photo ran on the front page of the *Times*'s March 31 edition with the caption: "In Basra, Panic as a Tactic of War." After it was noticed that some civilians appeared in the background twice, the *Times* fired Walski.

With their gloomy view of the war shattered, a new set of ever-so-sure media predictions of disaster has begun to congeal around the rebuilding effort.

Iraqis Show New Defiance

Word of U.S. and British setbacks rekindles hope, determination among

States would be bogged down and defeated by their steadfast resistance.
"I knew it before, but today I know it for sure. They will never

resistance suddenly sprang back to life.
And after a sharp battle at Nasiriyah, a key crossing on the Euphrates River, Iraq was

The Death of Innocents

It wasn't supposed to be like this. The Bush administration had envisioned a different kind of invasion in Iraq, one that would flood the Arab world with pictures of American soldiers feeding hungry people and giving medical attention to sick children.

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Bush Defends The Progress Of the War

Privately, Republicans Fret Over Uncertainties

By ADAM NAGOURNEY and DAVID E. SANGER

WASHINGTON, March 31 — President Bush mounted a vigorous defense today of the progress made in the war

U.S. BOMBS RAVAGE TARGETS IN BAGHDAD; WAVES OF TROOPS SWEEPING SOUTH IRAQ

The *New York Times*, rather than altering existing reality, tried to create its own from scratch. Lawrence Eagleburger, Secretary of State in the first Bush administration, recounted on the "Hannity & Colmes" TV show during the war that "About ten days ago, I was approached from the *New York Times* to write an op-ed piece. To make it very short, when I talked to them about it, I was told, What we want is criticism of the administration." Eagleburger refused to gin up the criticism-on-demand.

And then there was sheer, mind-boggling stupidity. Geraldo Rivera, once an open America hater, now one of the biggest cheerleaders for U.S. troops, spent some time with the 101st Airborne Division reporting for Fox News. On March 30, he drew a map in the sand for his TV camera, detailing the unit's current and future locations and explaining its mission, apparently blissfully unaware that disclosure of such information in combat can get people killed. Incredibly, Fox did not fire Rivera.

With the U.S. military and coalition forces having achieved complete victory, journalists have already moved on to new pastures of doubt and derision. Now that the war has ended so utterly different from the pictures painted by much of the media, a new set of ever-so-sure predictions of disaster has begun to congeal around the efforts to rebuild Iraq. On May 5, the *Los Angeles Times* announced in a front page headline that the "U.S. Struggles in Quicksand of Iraq: Held back by an array of forces, Americans have been unable to make a positive impression." Virtually the entire piece is about seemingly insurmountable problems and the alleged failure of Americans to address them. The remarks from Iraqis the reporter chose to include in the piece are the most unrealistic and peculiar ones, presented as conventional views: "The Americans promised us jobs, security, and safety, and none of those have materialized," a silk merchant in a town near the Euphrates is quoted as saying. Surely no American ever "promised jobs" to Iraqis.

Yes, a host of obstacles and predicaments will face the U.S. in Iraq for some time to come. But utterly ignored by most of the mainstream media is the abundant good news that exists as well. As *New York Post* journalist Jonathan Foreman, embedded with the 3rd Infantry Division, reports in the May 12 issue of the *Weekly Standard*: "To an amazing degree, the Baghdad-based press corps avoids writing about or filming the friendly dealings between U.S. forces here and the local population—most likely because to do so would require them to report the extravagant expressions of gratitude that accompany every such encounter. Instead, you read story after story about the supposed fury of Baghdadis at the Americans for allowing the breakdown of law and order in their city."

"The media have bizarrely high expectations about how quickly a conquered city should return to normal," warns Foreman. "Things may yet go horribly wrong here in American-occupied Baghdad. But it is bizarre and sad that so few journalists are able or willing to recognize this honeymoon period for what it is." As an example of Iraqi sentiments that are not being accurately communicated to Americans back home, he describes an encounter with one civilian who expresses his appreciation for the U.S.: "Everyone here wanted to go to America; now America has come here!"

"When this is all over," Victor Davis Hanson commented during the war, "I hope that there will be deep introspection and sober public discussion about the peculiar ignorance and deductive pessimism on the part of our elites." The fighting is basically done. Anyone seeing signs of "deep introspection" in our newsrooms? One can always hope.

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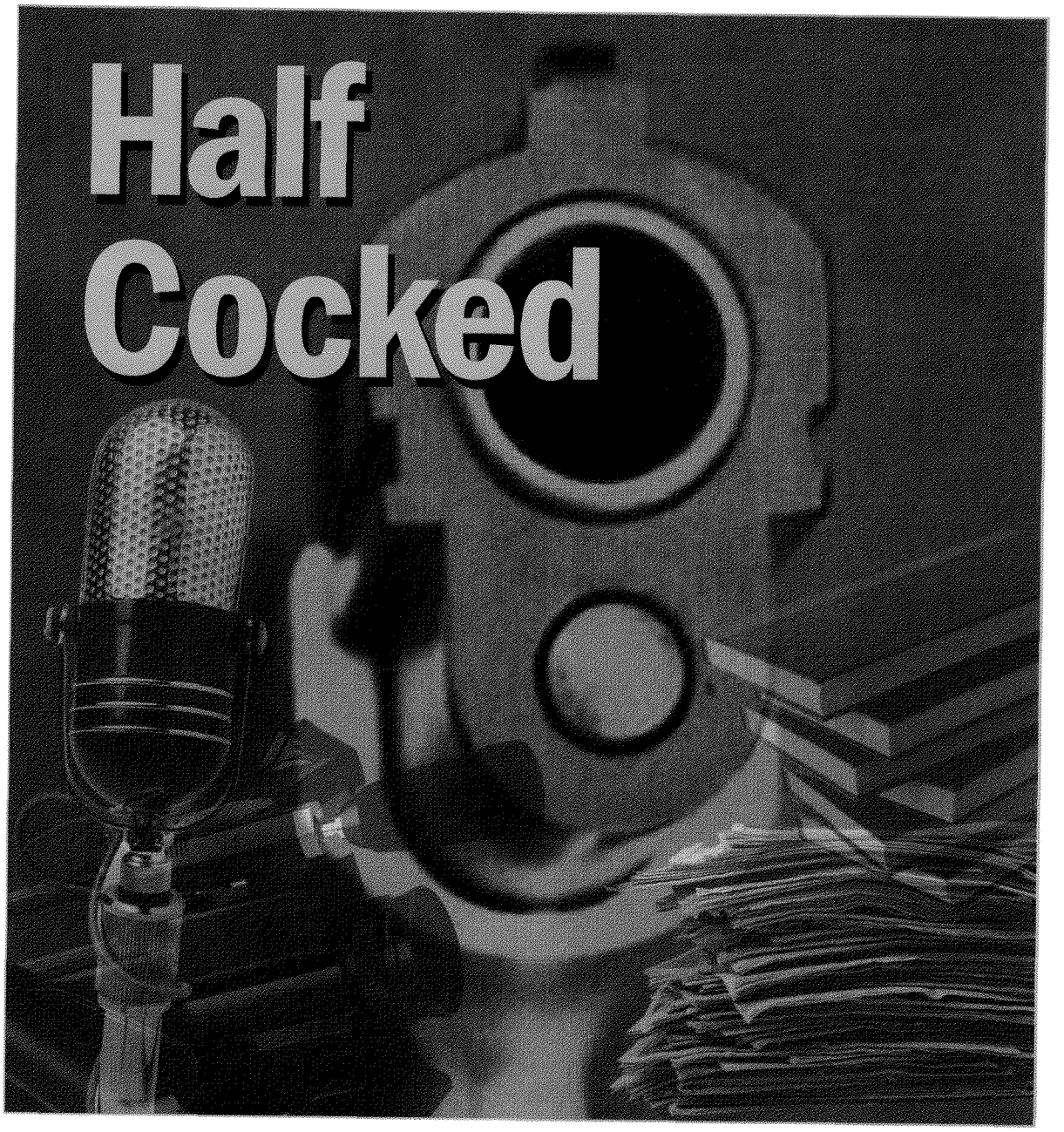

Why Most of What You See in the Media About Guns Is Wrong

By John Lott

I often give talks to audiences explaining that research by me and others shows that guns are used much more often to fend off crimes than to commit them. People are very surprised to learn that survey data show that guns are used defensively by private citizens in the U.S. anywhere from 1.5 to 3.4 million times a year. A question I hear repeatedly is: "If defensive gun use occurs so often, why haven't I ever heard of even one story?"

Obviously anecdotal stories published in newspapers can't prove how numerous these events are, but they can at least deal with the question of whether these events even occur. During 2001, I did two detailed searches on defensive gun uses: one for the period covering March 11 to 17 of that year, and another for the period July 22 to 28. While these searches were not meant to be comprehensive, I found a total of 40 defensive gun uses over those two weeks. Some representative examples:

Clearwater, Florida: At 1:05 a.m., a man started banging on a patio door, beat on a family's truck, then tore open the patio door. After numerous shouted warnings not to break into the home, a 16-year-old boy fired a single rifle shot, wounding the attacker.

Columbia, South Carolina: As two gas station employees left work just after midnight, two men attempted to rob them, beating them about the head and neck with a shovel handle. The

John Lott is a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute. This article is adapted from his new book The Bias Against Guns.

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male employee broke away long enough to draw a handgun from his pocket and shot at his attacker, who later died.

Detroit, Michigan: A mentally disturbed man yelled that the President was going to have him killed, and started firing at people in passing cars. A man at the scene who had a permit to carry a concealed handgun fired shots that forced the attacker to run away.

West Palm Beach, Florida: After being beaten during a robbery at his home, a homeowner began carrying a handgun in his pocket. When another robber attacked him just two days later the homeowner shot and wounded his assailant.

Columbia Falls, Montana: A woman's ex-boyfriend entered her home to sexually assault her. She got away long enough to get her pistol and hold her attacker at gun point until police arrived.

Baton Rouge, Louisiana: At 5:45 a.m., a crack addict kicked in the back door of a house and charged the homeowner, who shot him to death.

Gainesville, Florida: A newspaper carrier was dragged from his car and beaten by five men at 3:15 a.m. The victim then shot one of the attackers in the chest with a concealed weapon.

Tampa, Florida: Two teenage armed robbers went on a four-hour crime spree, hijacking cars, robbing people, and hospitalizing one victim with serious injuries. They were stopped when one intended victim, a pizza-store owner, shot and wounded one attacker.

Charleston, South Carolina: A carjacking was stopped by a 27-year-old victim who then shot one of his attackers. The victim had paused to ask directions when several men, one with a lengthy criminal record, jumped into the car.

When was the last time you saw a story in the national news about a private citizen using his gun to stop a crime?

These life and death stories represent only a tiny fraction of defensive gun uses. A survey of 1,015 people I conducted during November and December 2002 indicates that 2.3 million defensive gun uses occurred nationwide in 2001. Guns do make it easier to commit bad deeds, but they also make it easier for people to defend themselves where few alternatives are available. That is why it is so important that people receive an accurate, balanced accounting of how guns are used. Unfortunately, the media are doing a very poor job of that today.

Though my survey indicates that simply brandishing a gun stops crimes 95 percent of the time, it is very rare to see a story of such an event reported in the media. A dead gunshot victim on the ground is highly newsworthy, while a criminal fleeing after a woman points a gun is apparently not considered news at all. That's not impossible to understand; after all, no shots were fired, no crime was committed, and no one is even sure what crime *would have been* committed had a weapon not been drawn.

In other words, airplane crashes get news coverage, while successful take-offs and landings do not. Even though fewer than one out of 1,000 defensive gun uses result in the death of the attacker, the newsman's penchant for drama means that the bloodier cases are usually covered. Even in the rare cases where guns are used to shoot someone, injuries are about six times more frequent than deaths. You wouldn't know this from the stories the media choose to report.

But much more than a bias toward bad news and drama goes into the media's selective reporting on gun usage. Why, for instance, does the torrential coverage of public shooting sprees fail to acknowledge when such attacks are aborted by citizens with guns? In January 2002, a shooting left three dead at the Appalachian Law School in Virginia. The event made international headlines and produced more calls for gun control. Yet one critical fact was missing from virtually all the news coverage: The attack was stopped by two students who had guns in their cars.

The fast responses of Mikael Gross and Tracy Bridges undoubtedly saved many lives. Mikael was outside the law school returning from lunch when Peter Odighizuwa started shooting. Tracy was in a classroom waiting for class to start. When the shots rang out, chaos erupted. Mikael and Tracy were prepared to do something more constructive: Both immediately ran to their cars and got their guns, then approached the shooter from different sides. Thus confronted, the attacker threw his gun down.

Isn't it remarkable that out of 208 news stories (from a Nexis-Lexis search) in the week after the event, just four mentioned that the students who stopped the shooter had guns? A typical description of the event in the *Washington Post*: "Three students pounced on the gunman and held him until help arrived." New York's *Newsday* noted only that the attacker was "restrained by students." Many stories mentioned the law-enforcement or military backgrounds of these student heroes, but virtually all of the media, in discussing how the killer was stopped, said things such as: "students tackled the man while he was still armed," "students tackled the gunman," the attacker "dropped his gun after being confronted by students, who then tackled him to the ground," or "students ended the rampage by confronting and then tackling the gunman, who dropped his weapon."

In all, 72 stories described how the attacker was stopped, without mentioning that the heroes had guns. Yet 68 stories provided *precise* details on the gun used by the attacker: The *New York Times* made sure to point out it was "a .380 semiautomatic handgun"; the *Los Angeles Times* noted it was "a .380-caliber semiautomatic pistol."

A week and a half after the assault, I appeared on a radio program in Los Angeles along with Tracy Bridges, one of the Appalachian Law School heroes. Tracy related how "shocked" he had been by the news coverage. Though he had carefully described to over 50 reporters what had happened, explaining how he had to point his gun at the attacker and yell at him to drop his gun, the media had consistently reported that the incident had ended by the students "tackling" the killer. When I relayed what the *Washington Post* had reported, Tracy quickly mentioned that he had spent a considerable amount of time talking face-to-face with reporter Maria Glod of the *Post*. He seemed stunned that this conversation had not resulted in a more accurate rendition of what had occurred.

After finishing the radio show, I telephoned the *Washington Post*, and Ms. Glod confirmed that she had talked to both Tracy

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Bridges and Mikael Gross, and that both had told her the same story. She said that describing the students as "pouncing," and failing to mention their guns, was not "intentional." The way that things had come out was simply due to "space constraints."

I later spoke with Mike Getler, the ombudsman for the *Post*. Getler was quoted in the *Kansas City Star* as saying that the reporters simply did not know that bystanders had gotten their guns. After I informed him that Glod had been told by the students about using their guns, yet excluded that information, Getler said, "She should have included it." However, Getler said that he had no power to do anything about it. He noted that readers had sent in letters expressing concern about how the attack had been covered. But none of these letters was ever published.

A body on the ground is considered newsworthy, but a criminal fleeing after a woman points a gun apparently is not.

The *Kansas City Star* printed a particularly telling interview with Jack Stokes, media relations manager at the Associated Press, who "dismissed accusations that news groups deliberately downplayed the role gun owners may have played in stopping" the shooting. But Stokes "did acknowledge being 'shocked' upon learning that students carrying guns had helped subdue the gunman. 'I thought, my God, they're putting into jeopardy even more people by bringing out these guns.'"

Selective reporting of crimes such as the Appalachian Law School incident isn't just poor journalism; it could actually endanger people's lives. By turning a case of defensive gun use into a situation where students merely "overpowered a gunman," the media give potential victims the wrong impression of what works when confronted with violence. Research consistently shows that having a gun (usually just showing it) is the safest way to respond to any type of criminal assault.

It's no wonder people find it hard to believe that guns are used in self-defense 2 million times a year: Reporting on these events is systematically suppressed. When was the last time you saw a story in the national news about a private citizen using his gun to stop a crime? Media decisions to cover only the crimes *committed* with guns—and not the crimes *stopped* with them—have a real impact on people's perceptions of the desirability of guns.

To flesh out this impression with some data, I conducted searches of the nation's three largest newspapers—*USA Today*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and the *New York Times*—for the year 2001 and found that only the *Times* carried even a single news story on defensive gun use. (The instance involved a retired New York City Department of Corrections worker who shot a man who was holding up a gas station.) Broadening my search to the top ten newspapers in the country, I learned that the *Los Angeles Times*, *Washington Post*, and *Chicago Tribune* each managed to report three such stories in a year.

To gain further perspective, I did deeper searches comparing the number of words newspapers published on the use of guns for committing crimes versus stopping crimes. For 2001, I found that the *New York Times* published 104 gun-crime news articles—ranging from a short blurb about a bar fight to a front-page story on a school shooting—for a total of 50,745 words. In comparison, its single story about a gun used in self-defense amounted to all of 163 words. *USA Today* contained 5,660 words on crimes committed with guns, and not a single word on defensive gun use. The least lopsided coverage was provided by the *Washington Post*, with 46,884 words on crimes committed with guns and 953 words on defensive stories—still not exactly a balanced treatment.

Moreover, the few defensive news stories that got coverage were almost all local stories. Though articles about gun crimes are treated as both local and national stories, defensive uses of guns are given only local coverage in the rare instances they run at all. In the full sample of defensive gun-use stories I have collected, less than 1 percent ran outside the local coverage area. News about guns only seems to travel if it's bad.

This helps explain why residents of urban areas are so in favor of gun control. Most crime occurs in the biggest cities, and urbanites are bombarded with tales of gun-facilitated crime. It happens that most defensive gun uses also occur in these same big cities, but they simply aren't reported.

This imbalance isn't just limited to newspapers. Take the 1999 special issue of *Newsweek* entitled "America Under the Gun." Though over 15,000 words and numerous graphics were provided on the topic of gun ownership, there was not one mention of self-defense with a firearm. Under the heading "America's Weapons of Choice," the table captions were: "Top firearms traced to crimes, 1998"; "Firearm deaths per 100,000 people"; and "Percent of homicides using firearms." Nothing at all on "Top firearms used in self-defense," or "Rapes, homicides, and other crimes averted with firearms." The magazine's graphic, gut-wrenching pictures all showed people who had been wounded by guns. No images were offered of people who had used guns to save lives or prevent injuries.

To investigate television coverage, I collected stories reported during 2001 on the evening news broadcasts and morning news shows of ABC, CBS, and NBC. Several segments focused on the increase in gun sales after September 11, and a few of these shows actually went so far as to list the desire for self-defense as a reason for that increase. But despite slightly over 190,000 words of coverage on gun crimes, merely 580 words, on a single news broadcast, were devoted to the use of a gun to block crime—a story about an off-duty police officer who helped stop a school shooting. Not one of the networks mentioned any other defensive gun use—certainly not one carried out by a civilian.

Another place where the predilections of reporters color the news about guns is in the choice of authorities quoted. An analysis of *New York Times* news articles over the last two years reveals that *Times* reporters overwhelmingly cite pro-gun-control academics in their articles. From February 2000 to February 2002, the *Times* cited nine strongly pro-control academics a total of 20 times; one neutral academic once; and no academic who was skeptical that gun control reduces crime. Not once. The

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same pro-control academics were referenced again and again: Philip Cook of Duke, Alfred Blumstein at Carnegie Mellon, Garen Wintemute of the University of California at Davis.

This imbalance in experts interviewed cannot be explained away by an inability to find academics who are dubious about most gun control laws. Two hundred ninety-four academics from institutions as diverse as Harvard, Stanford, Northwestern, the University of Pennsylvania, and UCLA released an open letter to Congress in 1999 stating that the new gun laws being proposed at that time were "ill advised." These professors were economists, lawyers, and criminologists. None of these academics was quoted in *New York Times* reports on guns over a two-year period.

By ignoring defensive uses of guns, the media give potential victims the wrong impression of what works against violence.

Polls frequently serve as the basis of news stories. While they can provide us with important insights about people's views, polls can also mislead in subtle ways. In the case of weapons, poll questions are almost always phrased with the assumption that gun control is either a good thing or, at worst, merely ineffective. The possibility that it could have bad results and even increase crime is never acknowledged. Consider these questions from some well-known national polls:

- Do you think that stricter gun control laws would reduce the amount of violent crime in this country a lot, a little, or not at all? (Pew Research Center/*Newsweek*)
- Do you think stricter gun control laws would reduce the amount of violent crime in this country, or not? (ABC News/*Washington Post*)
- Do you think stricter gun control laws would, or would not reduce violent crime? (CBS News)

I reviewed 17 national and seven state surveys and found that all asked only whether gun control laws reduce crime; not one offered respondents a chance to consider whether gun control might increase crime. This notion apparently never entered the pollsters' minds.

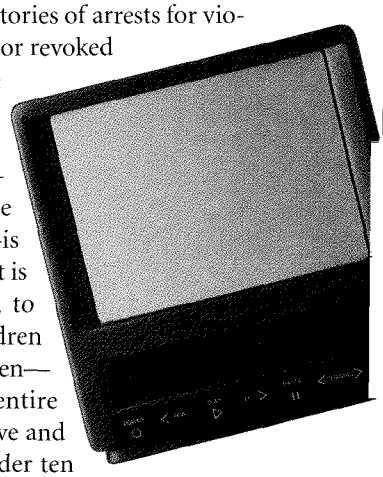
The omission in such polls of a "would increase crime" option creates a bias in two different ways. First, there is an "anchoring" effect. We know that the range of options people are offered in a poll affects how they answer, because many respondents instinctively choose the "middle ground." By only providing the choices that gun control reduces crime somewhere between "a lot" to "not at all," the middle ground becomes "a little."

Second, when the possibility that gun control could cause crime is removed from polls, this affects the terms of national debate. When people who hold this view never even hear their opinions mentioned in polls and news stories, they begin to think no one else shares their view. Repeated surveys that imply gun control either makes society better or has no impact gradually acculturate Americans to accepting the view that is constantly presented.

There are other subtle biases in the construction of these surveys. When a survey questions whether gun control will be "very important" for the respondent at the voting booth, the media often hear a "yes" answer as evidence that the person wants more gun control. Rarely do they consider that someone might regard a politician's position on gun control as important because he or she *opposes* it. This same blurring of opposite positions in one question causes gun control to be ranked more highly as an election issue than it should be. Polls typically compare issues such as "increased defense spending" (which captures supporters on just one side of the issue) with questions on "gun control" (where both anti- and pro-control partisans say the issue is "important," yet believe entirely different things).

A final area strongly affected by the media's anti-gun bias is that of accidental shootings. When it comes to this, reporters are eager to write about guns. Many have seen the public service ads showing the voices or pictures of children between the ages of four and eight, implying that there is an epidemic of accidental deaths of these young children.

Data I have collected show that accidental shooters overwhelmingly are adults with long histories of arrests for violent crimes, alcoholism, suspended or revoked drivers licenses, and involvement in car crashes. Meanwhile, the annual number of accidental gun deaths involving children under ten—most of these being cases where someone older shoots the child—is consistently a single digit number. It is a kind of media archetype story, to report on "naturally curious" children shooting themselves or other children—though from 1995 to 1999 the entire United States saw only between five and nine cases a year where a child under ten either accidentally shot themselves or another child.



The danger of children stumbling across guns pales in comparison to many other risks. Over 1,260 children under ten died in cars in 1999. Another 370 died as pedestrians hit by cars. Accidents involving residential fires took 484 children's lives. Bicycles are much more likely to result in accidental deaths than guns. Fully 93 children under the age of ten drowned accidentally in bathtubs. Thirty-six children under five drowned in buckets during 1998. In fact, the number of children under ten who die from any type of accidental gunshot is smaller than the number of toddlers who drown in buckets. Yet few reporters crusade against buckets or bathtubs.

When crimes are committed with guns, there is a somewhat natural inclination toward eliminating all guns. While understandable, this reaction actually endangers people's lives because it ignores how important guns are in protecting people from harm. Unbalanced media coverage exaggerates this, leaving most Americans with a glaringly incomplete picture of the dangers and benefits of firearms. This is how the media bias against guns hurts society, and costs lives.

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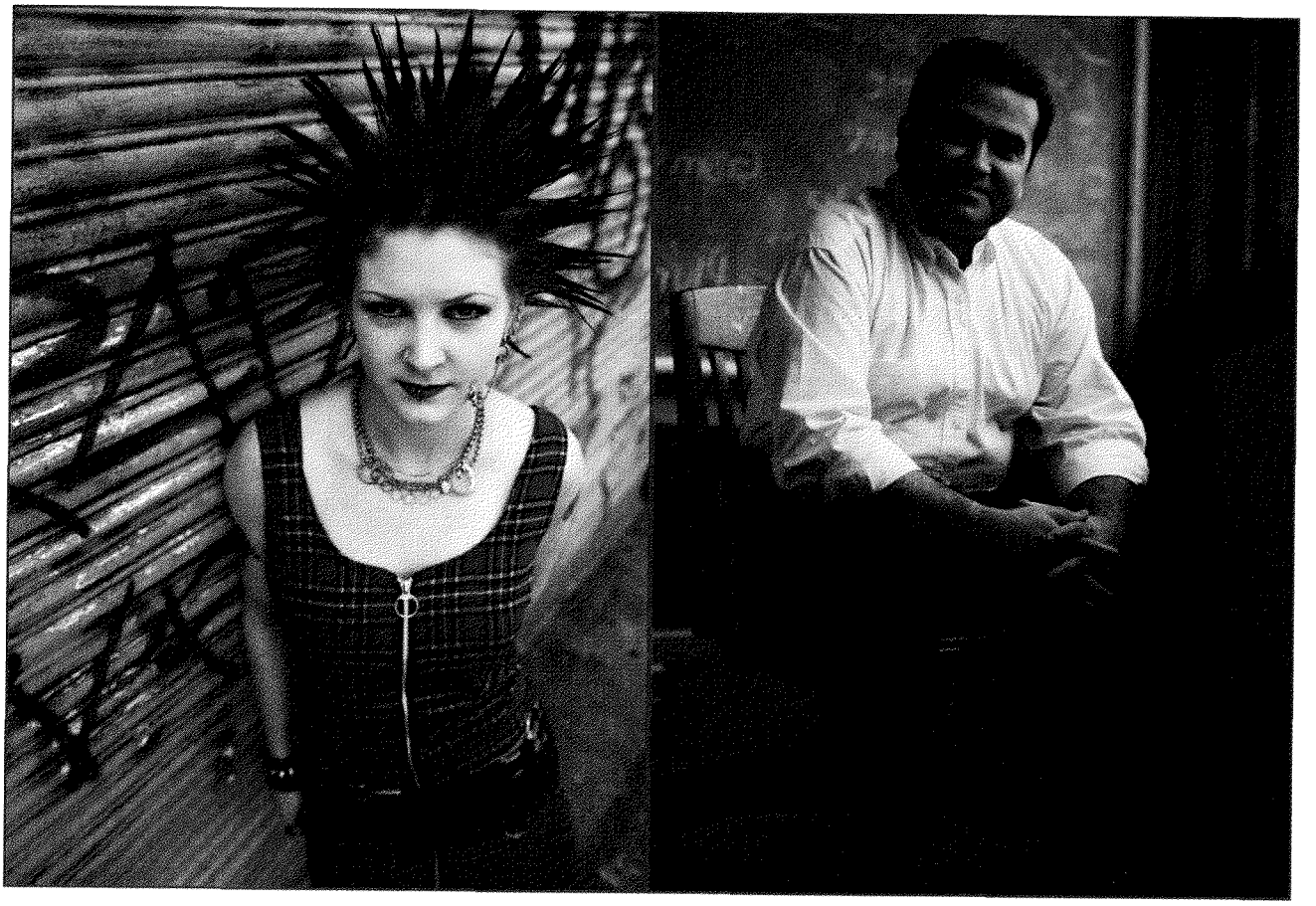

Paths to Prosperity

Many journalists believe yuppies, bohemians, and rock bands are the key to local economic growth. They ought to be looking at families.

By Joel Kotkin

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It has been a disappointing couple of years for many entrepreneurs across the nation, but for Ramon Alvarez things have never been better. Sitting in a cramped office at his bustling car dealership within a sprawling auto center here, the 43-year-old Alvarez looks forward to the rest of the year, indeed the next decade, with nothing but eager anticipation.

The poor performance of San Francisco and other glamour economies rebuts trendy claims about the underpinnings of economic growth.

"The Dow says the sky is falling," explains the lean, handsome native of Tijuana. "But we are breaking records here almost every month, and so are all the other local dealers. We're up 8 percent from last year."

Alvarez, who bought his Ford-Lincoln agency seven years ago and added a Jaguar dealership last year, has boosted his sales from ten cars per month in the mid 1990s to 114 a month now. He credits most of his success, and that of the other 15 dealers at the Riverside Auto Center, to the remarkable demographic and business growth that has made the Riverside-San Bernardino region of Southern California into arguably the strongest regional economy in the nation. Since June 2001, this highly suburban region east of Los Angeles, known locally as the Inland Empire—with a population exceeding 3 million people—has enjoyed annual job growth of over 3 percent.

No other area of the country of comparable size has experienced anything like this rate of job creation during the current soft economy. According to Economy.com, California's overall job numbers *fell* by 0.2 percent during the same period (driven largely by a rapid collapse of the over-inflated, over-hyped tech sector in the San Francisco Bay area), while the national rate dropped by a full percentage point.

The striking success of the Inland Empire—and the poor performance of places like San Francisco and other glamour economies of the late '90s such as New York City, Boston, and Seattle—sharply rebuts recent conventional media wisdom on the underpinnings of economic growth. In the late 1990s, a trendy argument launched by academics and propagated by journalists held that future economic growth depended on attracting high-technology workers and affluent yuppies. It was said that this in turn would happen only in places with lots of graduate students, artists, bohemians, homosexuals, and unmarried singles packed into a vertical city with loads of nightlife. In other words, places exactly the opposite of the sprawling, highly familial, lower-bourgeois Inland Empire.

The person most responsible for making this argument fashionable in development circles has been Carnegie Mellon University professor Richard Florida, author of a book called *The Rise of the Creative Class* and related articles like "Why Cities Without Gays and Rock Bands Are Losing the Economic Development Race." His ratings of desirable business locales are actually built on things like the "Coolness Ranking" (which counts things like bars and nightclubs per capita), the "Bohemian Index" ("artists" per capita), and the "Gay Index" (measuring the number of homosexuals, not how chipper citizens are).

Economic Valhalla, says this guru, lies not in appealing to business executives, mundane industries, or (least of all!) families. Rather, locales must make themselves attractive to the more effete, fashionable, culturally liberal group he calls the creative class—which covers everything from fancy lawyers and boutique owners to caterers and computer geeks.

Florida's analysis relied on some spurious interspersing of data sets. The high-tech concentration in the Bay Area proved gays and bohos (bohemians) were good for high tech, he announced. Never mind that very few of the tech jobs were located close to the Castro District, San Francisco's gay mecca. The reality that Silicon Valley is centered in dreary suburban San Jose and the San Francisco peninsula was not allowed to intrude on this blissfully wishful analysis. And no media watchdog bothered to test Florida's claims before passing them on.

Admittedly, during the dot-com boom of the late '90s, such an approach made at least passable sense. Artsy places like Seattle's Belltown, San Francisco's South of Market, and lower Manhattan were hot. But with the crashing of the dot-coms, such ideas are loopily out of sync with reality. Those markets now have some of the highest vacancy rates and lowest job growth totals in the nation.

Today, economic growth is more likely to be found in areas dismissed by Richard Florida and his media supporters as barely worth living in. It's not likely that this correction will be trumpeted with anything like the fervor of Florida's original claims, however, because many journalists prefer his original perspective. In fact, a whole industry has arisen over the last decade to promote the premise that economic growth directly follows "quality of life" factors that appeal to singles, young people, homosexuals, sophistos, and trendoids. What really matters are dance clubs, cool restaurants, art museums, and hip shopping districts, many writers agreed.

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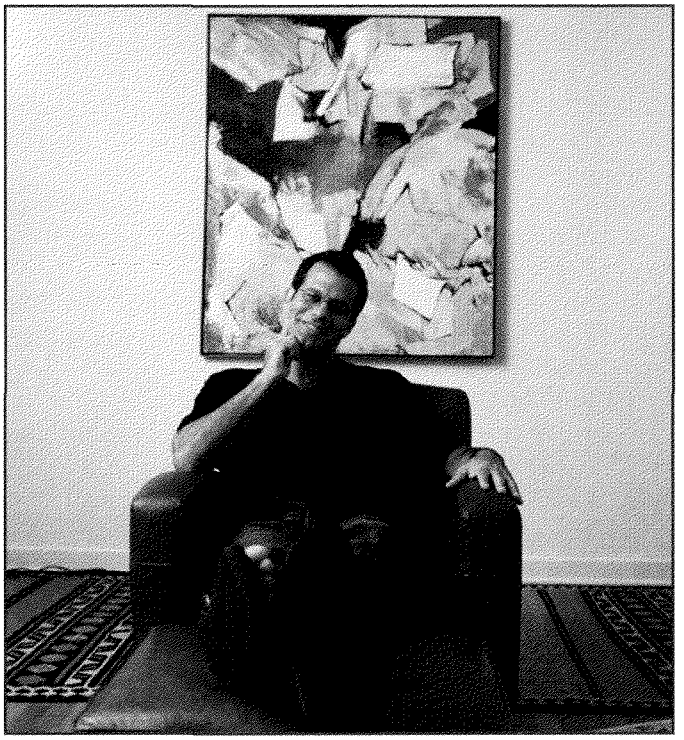
If you go to today's new growth hot-spots, however, you will find few of those supposed prerequisites of prosperity. Instead, in a land like the Inland Empire you will see single-family homes, churches, satellite dishes, and malls. These are places where households, not singles, dominate the economy. These are cultures attractive to ordinary families. And therefore to business people.

The reality is that family strength has a much longer and deeper track record as an indicator of economic health than bohemianism.

Family is the key factor here. The places high on Florida's "Creativity Index," such as San Francisco, Boston, and Seattle, also tend to be the parts of the U.S. with the fewest number of children per capita. In contrast, thriving places like McAllen, Boise, Fresno, Fort Worth, Provo, and the Inland Empire have among the highest percentages of children in the nation. And the reality is that family strength has a much longer and deeper track record as an indicator of economic health and entrepreneurial motivation than homosexuality or bohemianism.

America's new growth spots tend to be economies centered around basic industries like construction, distribution, retail, and low-tech manufacturing. This can be seen in the relative success of such diverse economies as Portland, Maine; Sioux Falls, South Dakota; and McAllen, Texas. Some tech centers—like Boise, Raleigh, Austin, and Provo—also rank as family-friendly locales, with well-above-average rates of married-with-children households.

In addition to being much more family friendly places, today's growth regions tend to differ from fashionable but economically lagging parts of the Northeast and coastal California in another way: They have different attitudes toward business and enterprising. Places like the Inland Empire are very friendly toward founders and builders of business establishments. In these places, expansion is regarded by citizens, local government, and regional media much more as a good thing than as a source of problems. That attitude is reversed in many more culturally liberal regions—and in the national media.



Richard Florida

"The governments here are basically honest and in tune with what people want in terms of jobs and services," believes Jack Brown, president of Stater Brothers, a San Bernardino-based food chain that has been adding roughly seven stores a year over the past decade, and now has 90 establishments spread throughout the region. "People here are not against growth."

Shifts in the logistics of business have also helped many of these regions succeed, suggests Jack Kasarda, a professor at the University of North Carolina's business school. Rather than being forced to locate their plants, storage warehouses, and distributions centers near major cities and entry ports, businesses now often set up in less congested areas with good air, rail, and freeway links, hardworking labor pools, and pro-enterprise attitudes.

This explains much of the rapid growth in places like McAllen, Texas—which has become the key shipping location in the Rio Grande Valley, and thus the hub for half of all trade between Mexico and the United States. Buoyed by a strong increase in distribution and manufacturing employment, the McAllen area enjoyed job growth of 2.5 percent over a recent 12-month period when the rest of Texas suffered a stagnant economy.

The successes of communities like McAllen are not flashes in the pan, but the culmination of many years of steady growth. Their solid growth patterns merely become more visible when other splashier industries and regions fall back to earth. "These places have been growing fairly consistently for over 30 years," says Kasarda. McAllen has been among the ten fastest growing metropolitan areas in the nation, measured by job creation, in every year of the past decade. The region grew in population by nearly 50 percent during the 1990s, to a current total of over 500,000 people. Over the last two years, McAllen recruited firms that added over 4,500 new jobs, mostly in call centers, distribution, and manufacturing.

Nowhere are the new patterns of job and population growth more evident than in the Inland Empire. The area has steadily increased its share of southern California's rail, truck, and air-transport business activity. An astonishing 70,000 logistics and manufacturing jobs were added during the '90s. In contrast, the coastal counties around Los Angeles lost over 43,000 such positions.

Once-obscure Ontario Airport on the outskirts of L.A. has now become a major air shipment hub, with six direct non-stop cargo flights to China daily. It now serves as the West Coast headquarters of UPS. The conjunction of these transportation nodes with cheap space—industrial and warehouse square footage costs roughly half what it does in Los Angeles—has made the intersection of Interstate 10 (the link to L.A.) and Interstate 15 (the north/south route between Las Vegas and San

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Diego) the busiest truck route in the nation.

But being a trucker's heaven tells only part of the story behind the Inland Empire's relentless growth. Even more important, suggests local economist John Husing, has been the stimulus provided by continuing migration of families to this region. Roughly 50 miles east of the southern California coast, people come here seeking affordable homes, a less urban environment, and room to grow. These things are hard to find in congested and pricey L.A.

Two thirds of California residents say they prefer to live in a suburban environment even if it entails more driving.

Since 1990, Husing reports, more than 660,000 people have moved into the San Bernardino-Riverside area. The bulk of this growth comes from family-minded ethnic minorities, predominantly Latinos, but also some Asians, who increasingly see the Inland Empire as the one place in southern California where their entrepreneurialism and hard work can be rewarded with a middle-class lifestyle. In the face of such enormous in-migration, it's remarkable that unemployment in the area has dropped by almost half since 1995.

New families keep coming as prices for homes rise throughout the rest of southern California. Today, only 36 percent of families can afford the median price of a home in Los Angeles County; less than 23 percent can do so in neighboring Orange County. In contrast, nearly half of all families in the Inland Empire (where housing is roughly 50 percent cheaper) can afford the current median price of a home. Not surprisingly, the region boasts one of the highest percentages of "married with children" households in the nation.

Few observers think the growth of these familial, suburbanized cities will slow anytime soon. Census Bureau projections predict population growth in the Inland Empire will continue throughout the next two decades, doubling the total population to almost 6 million. The metropolitan region is expected to gain more population than any but five states. Yet this growth and prosperity has done nothing to enhance the reputation of the Inland Empire among Los Angeles fashion-setters. Coverage of the region in the *Los Angeles Times* tends to be of the "hell on earth" variety. A typical November 2001 piece, headlined "Paying Price of Growth in Inland Empire," presented the typical litany of horrors: smog, congested freeways, year-round schools. Why, when other parts of southern California were "in full rebellion against sprawl," did the Inland Empire stubbornly continue "to welcome growth at almost any cost," wondered the journalists.

This reflects a consensus among many planners and government officials and political liberals that suburbs like the Inland Empire are horrible places to live. The post-war suburbs and "the great sweeping away of the old" they brought with them were a fateful mistake in this sentimental view, and doomed to failure. America is going to grow "into a placeless collection of subdivisions, strip malls, and office parks" instead of a "real town with real neighbors," claim the popular broadsides.

Today's growth suburbs are not only ugly and anti-ecological to many liberal analysts. It is often implied that there is "something wrong" with people who choose to live in them (i.e., they are stupid). Not to be outdone, a recent Centers for Disease Control report funded by slow-growth advocates denounced suburbs as a public health hazard due to lack of pedestrian activity and absence of safe bicycling areas.

This is not to say that places like the Inland Empire don't have real problems. Traffic, pollution, and other effects of growth do have to be dealt with. Since the early 1980s, average rush hour speed in the region has dropped 25 percent, bringing this area into the same slow lane occupied by Los Angeles. Yet over time, the people of the Inland Empire will find ways to deal with these growing pains. New residents are coming here in droves not because they are deluded but because they are drawn by the economic opportunities and suburban lifestyle. A recent survey by the Public Policy Institute of California found that 66 percent of California residents prefer to live in a suburban environment even if it entails more driving. An overwhelming 86 percent say they prefer to live in a single-family home.

Many residents bristle at snide characterizations of places like the Inland Empire by media and academic elites. Husing, the economist, points out that there are a growing number of high-end positions among the 300,000 new jobs San Bernardino-Riverside added in the 1990s. As better educated workers tire of commutes, they will choose to join local companies, open satellite offices, start their own firms, or telecommute. A shift toward the upscale is already being felt by housing developers, who report growing demand for larger, more expensive homes.

Jay Moss of KB Homes, a firm that builds roughly 1,500 new houses in the area annually, reports that more and more of the affluent homebuyers moving into the area are working locally. Five years ago, he estimates, 80 percent commuted to the coastal counties for work. Now only 50 percent do so.

The addition of higher paying jobs at the top of the local occupational ladder is likely to spur even more local immigration in the future. This will create a growing cadre of service businesses. And continued improvements in the quality of life. Husing expects most of the growth to come in the form of family-minded suburbanites, especially upwardly mobile Latinos who will flood into the area from slower growing and more expensive areas closer to the coast.

Certainly the horizon looks bright to Alvarez, the car dealer, who is selling 30 to 40 Jaguars per month, half of them to Latinos. "What we have here is families, and families create growth," says Alvarez, himself the father of three children. "There is a lot of generational mobility around here. All I see is a run of more growth—one that could last for years." But don't expect to read media paeans to America's pro-family, pro-business cities any time soon.

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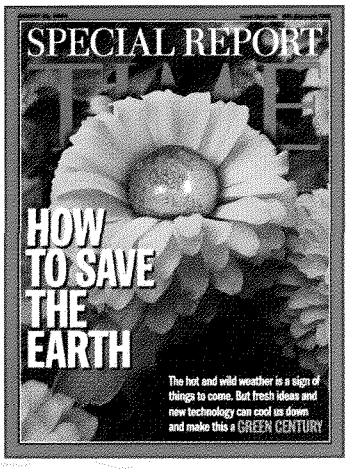
Mixed Atmosphere



Good and bad environmental reporting swirl together

By Steven Hayward

In his new book *The Real Environmental Crisis*, Berkeley professor of energy and resources Jack Hollander writes:

> Can you remember a day when you opened your morning newspaper *without* finding a dramatic and disturbing story about some environmental crisis that's either here already or lurks just around the corner? That would be a rare day.
>
> One day the story may be about global warming. The next it may be about overpopulation, air pollution, resource depletion, species extinction, sea-level rise, nuclear waste, or toxic substances in our food and water. Especially jarring is the implication in most of these stories that you and I are the enemy—that our affluent lifestyles are chiefly responsible for upsetting nature's balance; polluting our cities, skies, and oceans; and squandering the natural resources that sustain us. Unless we change our thoughtless and wasteful ways, we are reminded, the earth will become a very inhospitable place for ourselves and progeny.
>
> Such media reportage reflects the pervasive pessimism about the future that has become the hallmark of today's environmental orthodoxy. Its central theme is that the affluent society, by its very nature, is the polluting society—the richer we become, the more we consume the earth's scarce resources, the more we overcrowd the planet, the more we pollute the earth's precious land, air, and water. The clear implication of this viewpoint is that the earth was a better place before humans were around to despoil it.... There is a big difference between advising caution on a slippery road and crying "fire" in a crowded theater. We've had too much of the latter, in the name of environmentalism.

News executives and editors constantly argue that they serve as "filters" of news for the public. Yet the journalistic filtering of environmental gloom and doom is often so porous as to suggest that the only filters employed in some newsrooms are in the coffee makers.

Media inaccuracies, fads, and the press's pack mentality produce problems in coverage of many subjects, but for a variety of reasons the faults may be more severe on environmental reporting than other topics. Environmental issues combine complicated questions of earth science with the arcana of bureaucratic regulation, offering two paths for news writers to go wrong. Even when a reporter has some background in science or regulatory law, it is difficult to convey the full dimensions of some environmental controversies to general consumers of newspaper or broadcast stories.

The problems of environmental reporting are aggravated by the politics of the issue. Environmental advocacy organizations enjoy great moral authority with the media, because of their self-identification as "public interest" bodies. Industry, meanwhile, is viewed skeptically by many reporters suspicious of the profit motive. This tends to lead to asymmetry in news coverage, with the claims of environmental advocates accepted at face value, while industry claims are often overlain with, for instance, the amount of campaign contributions an industry has given to political office holders (as if environmental groups don't put money into politics).

It is certainly reasonable for reporters to point out industry self-interests, and to describe how different players tend to congeal around the two political parties. But environmental advocacy organizations should be viewed as critically as any other group. Many, like the Sierra Club and the League of Conservation Voters, are heavily involved in politics—overwhelmingly as open partisans of the Democratic Party. And an ideological agenda can be just as perverse as a self-interested agenda in the political process.

Besides, environmentalists have their own selfish interests.

Steven Hayward is the F. K. Weyerhaeuser Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, and principal author of the Index of Leading Environmental Indicators, *from which this article is adapted.*

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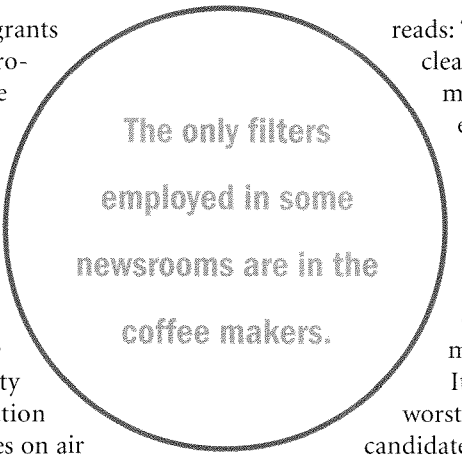
Many environmental groups receive large grants from the EPA, and would have to cut programs and staff if this funding were trimmed. A different President can have a huge effect on the fundraising and financial self-interests of Green lobbies. Yet reporters seldom if ever ask environmental groups about their funding sources.



News stories about the environment often uncritically convey the sensational claims of advocacy groups. A good example is news coverage of the annual air quality report from the American Lung Association (ALA), which features identical failing grades on air quality for many areas of the nation with widely varying conditions (because the ALA uses a questionable methodology that is never explained in the news copy). The news stories generated every year by this report typically fail to point out that air quality in most locations has improved substantially over the last ten years.

Then one month after the Lung Association report comes out, the U.S. Public Interest Research Group (USPIRG) releases its own annual study ("Danger in the Air"). This report uses an identical methodology, but the media never seem to notice it is the same study as the ALA's. A second round of identical stories about worsening smog appears, most little more than rewrites of the USPIRG press release.

Too often, environmental reporters present a preconceived morality tale as objective reporting. One of the worst examples of this genre was Eric Pianin's September 30, 2001 *Washington Post* story "Deaths Raise Alarm on Power Plants." Pianin's lead could have been borrowed straight from the script of *Erin Brockovich*: "Last fall, two Chicago-area high school students died of asthma attacks at school." Pianin then made the claim that proximity of the school to two coal-fired power plants caused the deaths. Not until the sixth paragraph of the story does Pianin acknowledge that "Industry officials, researchers, health groups, and environmentalists generally agree that it is impossible to directly link an individual's death to pollution or particulate matter from a specific power plant." Yet that is the premise of his entire article!

Often environmental articles don't even get the basic facts straight. A good example is Elizabeth Kolbert's "Bad Environments" in the May 15, 2002 issue of *The New Yorker*. Among her heated charges against President Bush was that "he had scuttled new standards for arsenic in drinking water." In fact, the Bush administration had adopted the new arsenic standard several months before. The Kolbert article also criticized Bush for adopting new regulations of the mining industry that some environmentalists disliked, failing to note that the regulations in questions were developed during the Clinton administration. Whatever happened to *The New Yorker's* famous fact-checking process?

A frequent theme of news coverage of Bush-era changes to the Clean Air Act was that the reforms would allow factories to avoid installing pollution-abatement equipment when their facilities were upgraded. Associated Press reporter John Heilprin's story of November 22, 2002 (headlined "White House Loosens Clean Air Rules") is an excellent example. The lead reads: "The Bush administration on Friday eased clean air rules to allow utilities, refineries, and manufacturers to avoid having to install expensive new anti-pollution equipment when they modernize their plants."

This is simply wrong. Plant changes are exempt only if there would be no increase in emissions. If the change involved even the possibility of higher emissions, pollution-control improvements would be required.

It would be impossible to single out the worst environmental reporting of the year, as the candidates for this dishonor are too numerous. On the other hand, a number of stories published in the last year show an improving ability of the media to appreciate the tradeoffs, nuances, and counter-intuitive nature of many environmental problems. To recognize some of these more responsible efforts, and encourage more, I have compiled a list of some of the best environmental stories of the latest year.

• *The Economist,* "Survey on Sustainable Development," July 6, 2002. *The Economist* regularly offers the best news coverage and most balanced editorials on environmental subjects of any major media source. Its best story of 2002 was a special survey that demystified the "dangerously slippery concept" of "sustainable development"—often a stalking horse for anti-industrial and anti-capitalist ideology.

• *Washington Post* reporter Michael Grunwald's June 2002 four-part series on the environmental problems of the Florida Everglades. Grunwald carefully describes the long background of the degrading of the Everglades, and then considers the multi-billion dollar scheme to remediate the historic swamp over the next 20 years. The project's cost may ultimately swell to as much as $80 billion, making it the most expensive public works project in history. Yet, Grunwald writes, there are many reasons to doubt it will work, and many scientists and environmentalists are now having second thoughts.

• Andrew Revkin, *New York Times*, "Biologists Sought a Treaty: Now They Fault It," May 7, 2002. One of the best environmental reporters among the major daily newspapers, Revkin recounts how biologists are having second thoughts about the Convention on Biological Diversity, which grew out of the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. A primary purpose of the treaty was to prevent the exploitation of biological resources in tropical latitudes. The document has now "spawned paralyzing biological bureaucracies built on the widespread belief that any scientist collecting samples—whether for a drug company or a dissertation—is bent on stealing genetic material and making a fortune."

• Kirk Johnson, *New York Times*, "You Should Have Seen the Air Back in '53," September 29, 2002. The concern over hazardous air quality in lower Manhattan in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks led *Times* reporter Johnson to look back to a time when air pollution "fouled the region with a ferocity unimaginable by the standards of today's far cleaner air." The media seldom carry stories comparing environmental conditions today with those of the past, which is one reason the public has a poor sense of the progress made. In the debunking

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spirit, Johnson also reveals that the trucks idling at Ground Zero waiting to haul away the rubble were responsible for more air pollution than was created by the collapse of the Trade Center itself.

• Jim Carlton, *Wall Street Journal*, "Green Group Tries To Drive Ranchers Off Federal Lands," November 11, 2002; Jon Christensen, *New York Times*, "Environmentalists Hail the Ranchers," September 10, 2002. This pair of stories explores the distrust at the center of western land controversies. The *Journal*'s Carlton describes the coercive tactics of Forest Guardians, an environmental group that sues financially pressed western ranchers to drive them out of business (and therefore off federal land). Environmental groups and their tactics are seldom described in such direct terms: "Hardline environmentalists, the Guardians are leaders of the zero-grazing movement, which aims to clear every head of cattle off the 265 million acres of wildlands the U.S. government owns in 11 western states." The *Times*' Christensen, meanwhile, profiles environmentalists and scientists who "are now saying that cattle ranches may be the last best hope for preserving habitat for many native species." The future of western ecosystems depends on which of these two factions of environmentalism prevails.

Especially jarring is the implication in most of these stories that you and I are the enemy.

• *Time* magazine, "Green Century: How to Save the Earth," August 26, 2002. In past special issues on the environment, *Time* magazine generally threw its lot in with eco-pessimists. This latest version represents a subtle but significant shift in tone. "So much environmental reporting emphasizes only the problems. We wanted to focus on the solutions," writes *Time* environmental editor Charles Alexander. Of special note is Andrew Goldstein's article criticizing the outlook and methods of environmental groups, under the title "Too Green for Their Own Good." Goldstein: "Fuzzy math and scare tactics might help Green groups raise money, but when they, abetted by an environmentally friendly media, overplay their hand, it invites scathing critiques."

• Audrey Hudson, *Washington Times*, "Tests Show Eight Metals in River Dumping," June 4, 2002. On the surface, Hudson's story appears to follow the standard story line about toxic dumping. The twist to this story is that the offending party wasn't a "corporate polluter," but the federal government's Army Corps of Engineers—the nation's guardian of wetlands. As Hudson followed up on this story, the feds claimed (comically) that their discharges actually help fish, by discouraging their capture by fishermen. ("EPA Says Toxic Sludge Good for Fish," *Washington Times*, June 19, 2002.) Unfortunately, the *Washington Times* was the only media outlet to follow this story.

• Clifford Krauss, *New York Times*, "The War Against the Fur Trade Backfires, Endangering a Way of Life," February 4, 2003. The article explores the unintended consequences of attacks on fur, the main livelihood of many Inuits and other indigenous Canadians. The collapse of the fur trade has "hurt the livelihoods of thousands of Canadian Natives, and enticed them to replace their lost incomes by welcoming into unspoiled areas the oil, gas, and mining interests they once opposed." "I can't find the words to fight…a bunch of Hollywood rich people who talk as if animals think like humans, when they don't," one seal hunter is quoted as saying.

• Blaine Harden, *New York Times*, "They Brake for Turtles in Padre Island Park," December 1, 2002. When Congress created Padre Island National Park on the Texas coast 40 years ago, it included the highly unusual stipulation that oil and gas exploration be allowed to continue in the new park. In addition, an estimated 800,000 tourists a year come to the park to drive their cars on the beach. None of this has prevented increasing numbers of Kemp's Ridley sea turtles (an endangered species) from breeding there. Reporter Harden summarizes that "Padre Island has consistently defied all-or-nothing arguments about land use, whether from outraged environmentalists or hard-line advocates of energy exploration."

• The Associated Press, November 2002. In a report on an EPA study of oak trees in the Ozark forest near St. Louis that emit isoprene (a precursor to formaldehyde), the AP noted that up to 65 percent of ozone-forming chemicals may come from trees rather than industrial sources. Of course, the claim that trees could be a source of air pollution earned Ronald Reagan some of his most severe ridicule.

• "Fighting Malaria With DDT," *New York Times* house editorial, December 23, 2002. The environmental editorials of the *New York Times* are generally as conventionally and sentimentally Green as they come, so it was remarkable to see the *Times* deviate from the environmental party line and endorse the continued use of DDT in parts of the developing world where malaria is still epidemic. (Malaria kills one of every 20 children in Africa.) The *Times* gently notes the hypocrisy of wealthy Western nations who now refuse to help African nations eradicate malaria with limited use of DDT. "America used DDT to eradicate malaria, as did southern Europe and India."

• Andrew Kenny, *The Spectator*, "Prepare for the Big Chill," June 22, 2002. There are few media outlets willing to give prominent coverage to climate-change skeptics, so it was notable when *The Spectator* of London devoted its cover to Andrew Kenny's spirited and lengthy frontal attack on the global warming hypothesis. Kenny wonders whatever happened to the seemingly well-founded worry 25 years ago that the major climate threat facing the planet was a new ice age, whose effects would be much worse than a warming. Kenny also decries the lack of seriousness among climate alarmists—if they were truly concerned about CO_2 emissions as a mortal threat, they would embrace nuclear power. But of course that's an environmentalist heresy.

That's 13 stories on the sensible side. Only several hundred more to go.

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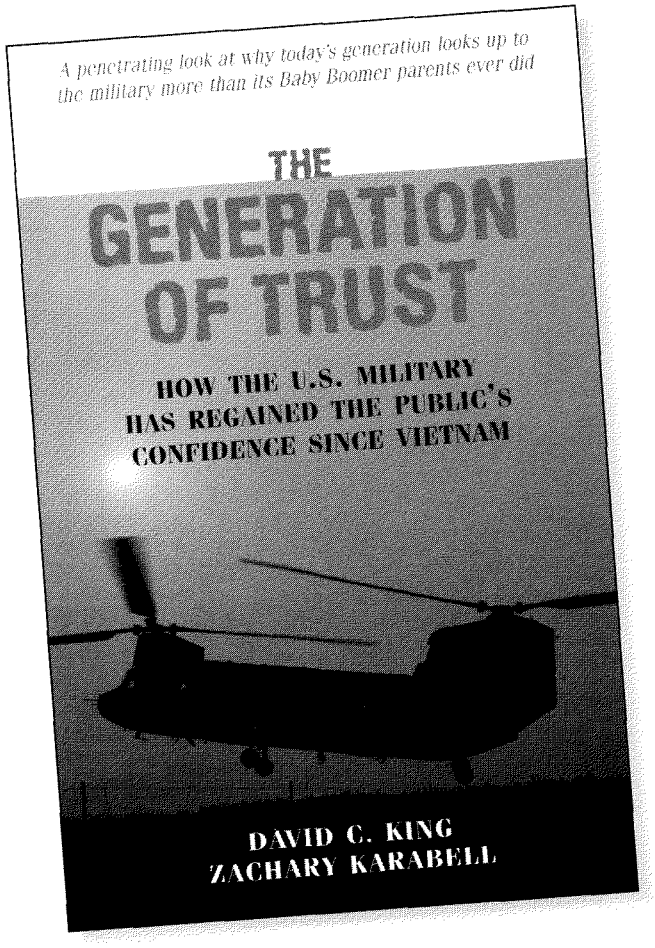
New from the AEI Press

A penetrating look at why today's generation looks up to the military more than its Baby Boomer parents ever have.



Relying upon extensive polling data, *The Generation of Trust* explores why public confidence in the military since Vietnam has risen just as confidence in most other institutions has declined. Authors David C. King and Zachary Karabell show that this trend is partly driven by a new generation of Americans, largely Generation X (born 1961 through 1975) and especially Millennials (born after 1975). This illuminating study of how the military gained and sustained the public trust offers lessons for other institutions—including divisions of the federal government and fields such as law, medicine, education, and religion—on how to emulate the success of the military in improving their public images.

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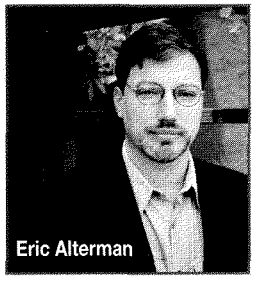
Big Dumb Lie

Journalists who insist there is no media bias problem are just cutting themselves off from the American public

By Jonah Goldberg


Eric Alterman

If you listen to a growing chorus of liberals and leftists, you might think that one of America's biggest problems today is, hold onto your hats, "conservative media bias." When Al Gore announced he wouldn't run for President, he complained about the right-wing media. *New York Times* columnist Paul Krugman is so convinced that the media are conservative he always puts "liberal media" in quotation marks to convey its mythical, unicorn-like quality. "Sooner or later, I think we're all going to have to acknowledge that the myth of the liberal bias in the press is just that, it's a myth," insists Jack White of *Time* magazine. Yes indeed, assures *Washington Post* columnist E. J. Dionne, the media is "heavily biased toward conservative politics and conservative politicians."

Well, that's certainly news to most of the public. (See the polls on page 61.) Tell typical Americans that there's a right-wing bias in reporting today, and by about a three-to-one margin they'll call you a false prophet. But the false prophets have a new Holy Book—a tome entitled *What Liberal Media?* by Eric Alterman. It adds a sterling new example to the old observation that liberals will believe anything convenient if someone will just say it loud enough and often enough.

First, some fair disclosure: Eric Alterman mentions me, my mother, this magazine, the American Enterprise Institute and its scholars, *National Review*, and numerous friends and colleagues of mine in his book. According to Alterman's view, that makes pretty much anything I write dismissable—not because of what I say, but because of where I come from.

You see, large chunks of *What Liberal Media?* are simply prose versions of those spider-webby diagrams purporting to expose a vast right-wing conspiracy. So-and-so gave money to think tank A, which gave a job to writer B, who penned an article for magazine C, which once got a grant from foundation D, blah, blah, blah. You can almost imagine, in Alterman's mind's eye, a retromingent slug leaving a trail linking each nefarious conservative outlet and scalawag. Wherever the creature goes and whatever it touches becomes automatically tainted, somehow less than honest.

According to Alterman's massive guilt-by-association charge, no American conservative could write fairly about his book—or much of anything else. Because we're all guilty of…well…of actually believing what we say and doing something about it.

Anyone who's met many of the conservative journalists, researchers, and authors whom Alterman names knows that most tend to be the sort of people *least* likely to take orders from any politburo—conservative or otherwise. Sure, the Right has its hacks—and Alterman does good job skewering some of them—but that's true of every cause and enterprise. Attacking associations rather than actual public arguments is simply his attempt to discredit motives rather than argue facts. This is an old tradition of the Left, going back to the 1930s when American communists would attack the motives of their accusers rather than the veracity of the accusation. Today, whether railing against tax cuts that might go to "the rich," or blocking Miguel Estrada from becoming a judge because he's not an "authentic Hispanic," these associational *ad hominem* attacks remain the Left's favorite rhetorical strategy for undermining opponents.

"Conservatives have spent billions during the last three decades, both to pressure the mainstream media to move rightward and to create their own parallel media structure, which serves the same purpose as it provides an alternative viewpoint both to the faithful and the gullible," writes Alterman. "Unbeknownst to millions of Americans who continue to believe that the media are genuinely liberal—or that liberals and conservatives are engaged in a fair fight of relative equality—liberals are fighting a near hopeless battle in which they are enormously outmatched in most measures."

There is an obvious response to this: "Get this man a doctor." But let's delve a bit further, as it is rare to find so few words crammed with so much disingenuousness. Sure, conservatives have built a parallel media structure. No secret there, even if Alterman makes it sound like it is one. (If we've spent billions, though, I feel cheated. Most of what I see operates on a shoestring.)

But back up a step: Why did conservatives feel a *need* to set up parallel media channels, with all the effort that entailed? Because the existing structures—elite newsrooms, plus the academic, publishing, and entertainment industries that intertwine with the news business—are so hostile to conservative views that the only way to compete in the public debate was to set up shop across the street. Let me give you an example from personal experience. I was the conservative media critic for the now-defunct *Brill's Content*. The editors and staff—self-appointed arbiters of good journal-

TAE *media critic Jonah Goldberg writes our BEAT THE PRESS column.*

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ism—were pretty much all liberals and leftists. A shocking number of them got their start at *Mother Jones*. I never encountered another conservative of any stripe.

Alterman says the "alternative viewpoint" promoted by conservatives (and by the way, if conservatism is the "alternative," what's the mainstream if not liberal?) is useful only to the "faithful and the gullible." In other words, it's merely the zealous and stupid who believe the media are institutionally liberal. The reasonable and wise know they aren't.

Their aim is to move the already liberal media even further to the left.

But anyway, why is it dangerous to democracy if conservatives who view the media as too far left try to pull them back? That sounds like healthy democratic activism in action. Besides, Alterman's doing the same thing, trying to move the media left. So what is the big deal?

That's the trick. Alterman's project isn't really to disprove that the media are liberal, but rather to move the already liberal media *further* to the left. He admits that "elite media reporting favors gun control, campaign finance reform, gay rights, and the environmental movement." He simply isn't bothered by that, "as some conservative critics are."

Keep in mind that Eric Alterman is media critic for *The Nation*—a hysterically left-wing magazine dedicated to the proposition that corporate America, U.S. foreign policy, and the Republican Party are criminal, racist, or both. The simple reality is that, for him, the Democratic Party is far too conservative.

If Alterman and fellow liberals were to make the argument that the U.S. media isn't as left-wing as it was a decade or two ago, or that it isn't as left-wing as some conservatives claim, or as left-wing as Alterman would like it to be, it would be a lot easier to take his argument seriously. It's certainly true that America has moved to the right over the last 25 years, and it's not shocking to think that the media have become (a little) less dismissive of conservative ideas, especially now that it's become clear that there's a market for conservative wares.

But because Alterman and friends can't conceive of a media they would ever consider too liberal, they lament any rightward drift at all, and declare it dangerous and unwarranted. Moreover, they are highly selective in their gaze. Alterman looks to the handful of conservative media outlets and ignores the horde of liberal ones. He fulminates about the influence of the "wild men" at the *Wall Street Journal* op-ed page, for instance, but barely mentions *New York Times* editorialists. Indeed, at times it seems Alterman has never even heard that the *Times* exists, let alone that it is both extremely liberal and more influential than any other news organ.

Alterman rails against the conservative perfidy of Fox News, yet sees little to no evidence that ABC, NBC, CBS, CNN or MSNBC might be liberal. *Time, Newsweek, The New Yorker, Harpers*, NPR etc. don't warrant much attention or worry. But he insists that the (vastly tinier) *Weekly Standard* has dangerous influence.

The Bradley, Olin, and Scaife Foundations are said to be wreaking havoc on the gullible masses. But the (hugely richer and highly liberal) Ford, Rockefeller, and Pew foundations don't merit any mention at all. The American Enterprise Institute and the Heritage Foundation are claimed to pull the country to the Right, but Harvard, Berkeley, etc. seem to have no gravitational mass at all in his eyes. It's as if Alterman scans the whole political landscape through the lenses of some novelty glasses which can only pick up conservatives.

One annoying habit is Alterman's insistence on counting pundits as proof of conservative bias. He cites the fact that CNN hired Bill Bennett and me as commentators, but has trouble fathoming that this might be because even the network execs recognized they needed to add some balance. The unfortunate truth is, conservatives usually get invited onto the main networks merely to be "conservatives." I get asked "What do people on the right think?" while someone like Jeff Greenfield—a former aide to Bobby Kennedy, and certainly a liberal—is bequeathed the authority of independent vision and nonpartisan insight by the network programmers.

This raises one of Alterman's biggest problems. He simply dismisses the proven fact that the vast majority of journalists admit they are liberal. When nine out of ten reporters state in a survey that they voted for Bill Clinton, Alterman counters that Clinton wasn't very liberal, and that if he had run for president in, say, Belgium or Germany he'd be considered conservative. That's a debatable point, but it doesn't change the fact that in America the press corps clusters almost entirely at one end of our political spectrum, consistently voting for the most liberal candidate available. If it keeps Alterman up at night to think that our liberals are to the right of liberal Swedes, let that be his white whale.

Because he wears such rigid ideological blinders, even Alterman's most effective chapter—on economic reporting—misses many of the most obvious truisms of contemporary economic journalism. Like the fact that the "homeless problem" seems to go away the second a Democrat gets elected, to re-emerge the moment there is a Republican in the executive chair (in the same way the "scandal of income inequality" emerges as a front-page story only when there is a Republican in the White House). He gets no argument from me that the mainstream media's economics coverage is bad, but it is bad in part because it is partisan.

Alterman also clings to the bizarre notion that corporations are inherently right-wing. They aren't on any social issue I can think of. And on economics it's hard to think of too many corporations willing to lose money defending the conservative principle of free trade if they can make money from supporting tariffs or subsidies.

Eric Alterman's project will fail—for the simple reason that it's not based on truth. Ultimately, the assertion that today's media are not liberal is a big lie, and one that most American citizens instinctively disagree with. Somehow it doesn't occur to him, and the many other reporters in denial, that Fox News and Rush Limbaugh are giving Americans something they want very much and feel is missing from other media offerings.

I realize the market doesn't mean much to these guys, but it needs to be said: Nothing is stopping Americans from buying what Alterman and his crowd are selling. Nothing except the good judgment of the American public.

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The Most Important University You've Never Heard Of

By Mark Hemingway

The Long Beach, California campus of DeVry University.

Among academics and liberal professionals, technical schools have never gotten any respect. For-profit educational institutions also get a bad rap from that group. So you can just imagine what education elites think of for-profit technical schools.

Nonetheless, private technical education has boomed over the last decade. There are now 2,445 separate profit-making institutions that specialize in providing technical training. In addition, there are 1,950 private not-for-profit schools in this field.

That's good news for anybody who's ever struggled to add a few extra megabytes of RAM to his computer, tried to get her phone company to install DSL service, or searched fruitlessly for someone who can service his electronic climate-control system. Many liberal arts degrees from conventional colleges are not worth the sheepskin they are printed on. Artists and poets may be held in high regard by society, but it's the guy who literally makes the trains run on time who everybody wants to work with. Good technical education is something of which America needs a lot more. But it's going to take some fresh institutions and new consumer choices to bring supply and demand into balance in this schooling sector.

Students hoping to actually be employed after graduation are figuring out that technical schools can be a good place to get an education. About 1.5 million students now attend for-profit educational institutions in the country—the vast majority of which are trade or technical schools. All told, this has become a $3.5 billion industry.

While the general public, education elites, and the media have generally missed the birth of this vast and vital sector, the business community has been supportive all along. During the tech boom of the '90s, when technical and information technology workers were gravely short in many areas, technical schools came of age. One of the best-positioned was DeVry University, a multi-campus institution with 24 branches spread across the country, serving 45,000 students.

One of the oldest and largest technical schools in the U.S., DeVry went public in 1991. As DeVry met or exceeded its earnings targets in every one of the next 40 quarters, its stock rose sharply. The company had no problem attracting students, either. The average SAT score of an incoming DeVry enrollee coincides nicely with the national average.

Mark Hemingway is a 2002 Phillips Foundation Journalism Fellow.

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Of course, the tech bubble has now burst. But for long-term investors and ambitious students, DeVry remains a very smart buy. While public optimism about the information economy outraced financial reality during the '90s, today an equally exaggerated pessimism has bubbled up. According to the U.S. Information Technology Association, there were 850,000 unfilled information technology jobs in this country in 2000. In 2001, after the Internet economy collapsed, with ensuing layoffs, there were still 425,000 technical jobs going begging. There remains a huge underfilled job market for graduates of tech schools like DeVry (see chart).

Old-fashioned colleges and universities could learn a lot from the revolutionary educational approaches of their for-profit colleagues.

Today's misperception that technology-related jobs have dried up isn't likely to last long. Certainly DeVry has continued to expand its operations. The firm has opened two new undergraduate campuses and six adult learning centers over the course of the last year.

For those who are accustomed to traditional college atmospherics, and have never set foot on the campus of a technical college, taking a tour of DeVry University's brand new campus in Arlington, Virginia will come as an awakening. It's across the street from a business park, and in a building adjacent to a shopping mall. From the outside it looks nothing like a college. From the inside it's not very welcoming at first. The Arlington campus is mid-sized by DeVry standards—about 80,000 square feet of interior space, with long white institutional hallways and overhead fluorescent lighting. There are lots of small classrooms and laboratories lining the hallways. The low ceilings and lack of windows might make you yearn to run out to a quad and toss a Frisbee around.

As far as DeVry is concerned, though, the lack of ivy-covered buildings and grass gives it a distinct advantage over more traditional forms of education. A traditional college with a similar number of students and classrooms would be situated on 30+ acres and have dozens of under-utilized buildings. Holding overhead costs down allows DeVry to keep class sizes and campuses small. (Once a DeVry campus gets more than 2,500 students, the company looks to open another campus in the same area.)

DeVry and other for-profit educators have done a much better job of keeping expenses under control than other forms of higher education, and this keeps them accessible to students. Low overhead also allows DeVry to invest more money in facilities directly related to student instruction. The most obvious difference in this regard is equipment. Though the campus may not have much to offer in the way of aesthetics, it is impressively wired. The vast majority of the classrooms have a computer at every desk. Stations are networked so that professors can view the work on each individual student's monitor, and project it on a screen in front of the class if they want to demonstrate something.

And that's just a standard classroom. Many of the more technical classes are taught in laboratories with much more equipment. The telecommunications classrooms are organized to make groups of desks represent different sections of an imaginary town, each with different telecommunications needs, physically illustrating how telephone networks are utilized. In the back of the class there is a sleek black rack of equipment capable of running all the phones in a real-life town of 10,000 people. Many of DeVry's classrooms and labs are equipped with computers that have removable hard drives, so that students can take their work wherever they go on campus.

John Giancola, the dean of academic affairs at the Arlington campus, apologizes profusely upon entering the library. His facility has only been open for a little more than a year, and they're still building the collection. At the moment it contains around 5,000 volumes, soon to quadruple. These are books and technical manuals, a few dozen periodicals, and some odds and ends like a videotape of *Macbeth* (suggesting DeVry teaching isn't entirely limited to technical subjects).

DeVry has constantly revised and adapted its curriculum over the years to reflect the changing needs of technical professions. Right now, with technologies advancing at unprecedented rates, DeVry knows that skilled technical workers must have more than a narrow skill set. Consequently, students earning a degree from DeVry must spend lots of time studying liberal arts and business management, in addition to staring at their oscilloscopes.

"What industry started saying to us ten years ago," reports Giancola, "is 'we don't want somebody who's completely technical.' We need a well-rounded student. Over the last ten years, we've made major changes to get humanities courses into our curriculum. If you get students too focused on an occupational field, they don't look up. We're trying to get them to look up, and around them, and see how everything fits together." A quick glance at the DeVry course cata-

The techie crunch
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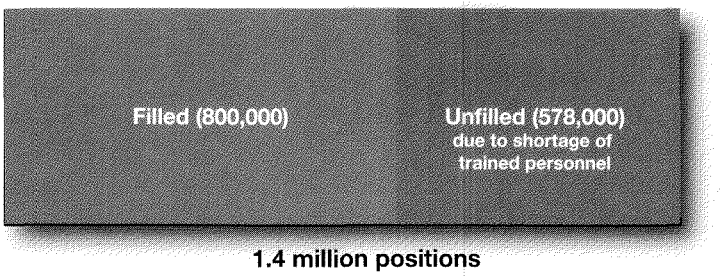

Source: U.S. Information Technology Association.

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log shows that while you're not going to major in Feminist Studies at one of their facilities, the curriculum is broad enough to include courses like "Vietnam and the 20th Century Experience," as well as courses on everything from film to poetry.

While they primarily teach technological skills, schools like DeVry have realized that critical thinking skills and business savvy are what will keep students on top of their profession years down the road, not their mastery of a software program that will be obsolete a year from now. Giancola stresses that this philosophy is ingrained in the faculty. DeVry presents education as an unending process to be repeated over and over, not a set of facts to be learned once.

In addition to having an academic background in their subjects, DeVry professors generally must have at least two years of industrial experience, and two years of teaching experience before they're hired. Once they've joined the firm they must spend a significant amount of time in continuing professional development, attending conferences and seminars that hone abilities as both educators and technology experts.

"If they don't stay on top of their field, we get old quick," says Giancola. "The one thing we look for in faculty, and what we want them to feed back to the students, is the importance of lifelong learning. We want students to understand that whether it's general education or technical, they have to keep reading, they have to keep learning new things. We don't want a professor whose notes are on parchment."

DeVry-style education is not only more efficient. It manages to beat traditional universities in some surprising areas. For instance, 40 percent of the students enrolled at DeVry are minorities. "Part of our commitment starting many years ago," says Loretta Franklin, president of DeVry's Arlington campus, "was to work to reduce the digital divide." In this they are succeeding smashingly.

Without any of the political turmoil and legal wrangling created by affirmative action college admissions, DeVry is achieving, through market means, the integration that many universities simply pay lip service to.

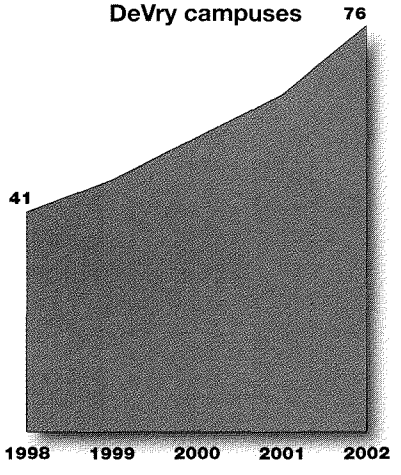
The new kids on the block are also providing new forms of pedagogy, and training future employees for different styles of work. "We try to teach students to work in teams and groups, because that's more of what's happening in technology and business settings. Students have to be able to work with other individuals who are not like them, who are coming from other cultures and other parts of the world," states Franklin. "Our students are able to converse across boundaries, and come to real-life job settings prepared, because they're getting that experience right here in our classrooms and laboratories." Without any of the political turmoil and legal wrangling created by affirmative action college admissions, DeVry is achieving, through market means, the integration that many universities simply pay lip service to.

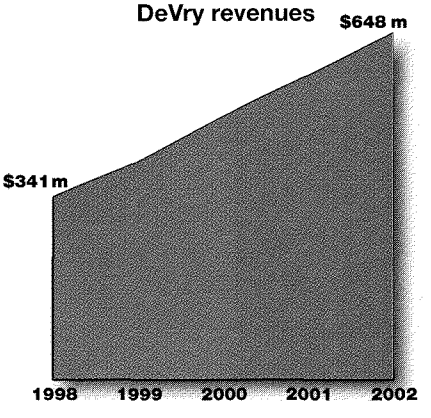
Certainly employers seem sold on the skills and preparation of DeVry students. Nearly 90 percent of DeVry graduates are working in degree-related jobs within 180 days of graduation. They routinely find employment with firms ranging from Fortune 500 companies to the CIA.

Despite their successes, DeVry and other "no frills" technical schools hardly threaten the primacy of regular universities. The humanities will always have their place, and in the eyes of many students, traditional universities maintain one big advantage over technical schools: social life. Undergraduates who dream of football games and fraternity parties will go other places. DeVry is a commuter school that attracts many non-traditional students, but helping lost teenagers find themselves is not part of what they do.

It's true that some of the benefit of a traditional college comes entirely outside of classes, when students sit around in dorm lounges and study groups having addled late night discussions about the world as they find it. That kind of fraternization is not common at a technical school.

Despite this, technical schools have carved out an important niche in the educational market, and they continue to grow. They no longer need to justify their existence or prove that they are a legitimate option in higher education. The new question that needs to be asked is what old-fashioned colleges and universities can learn from the revolutionary educational approaches of their new colleagues.





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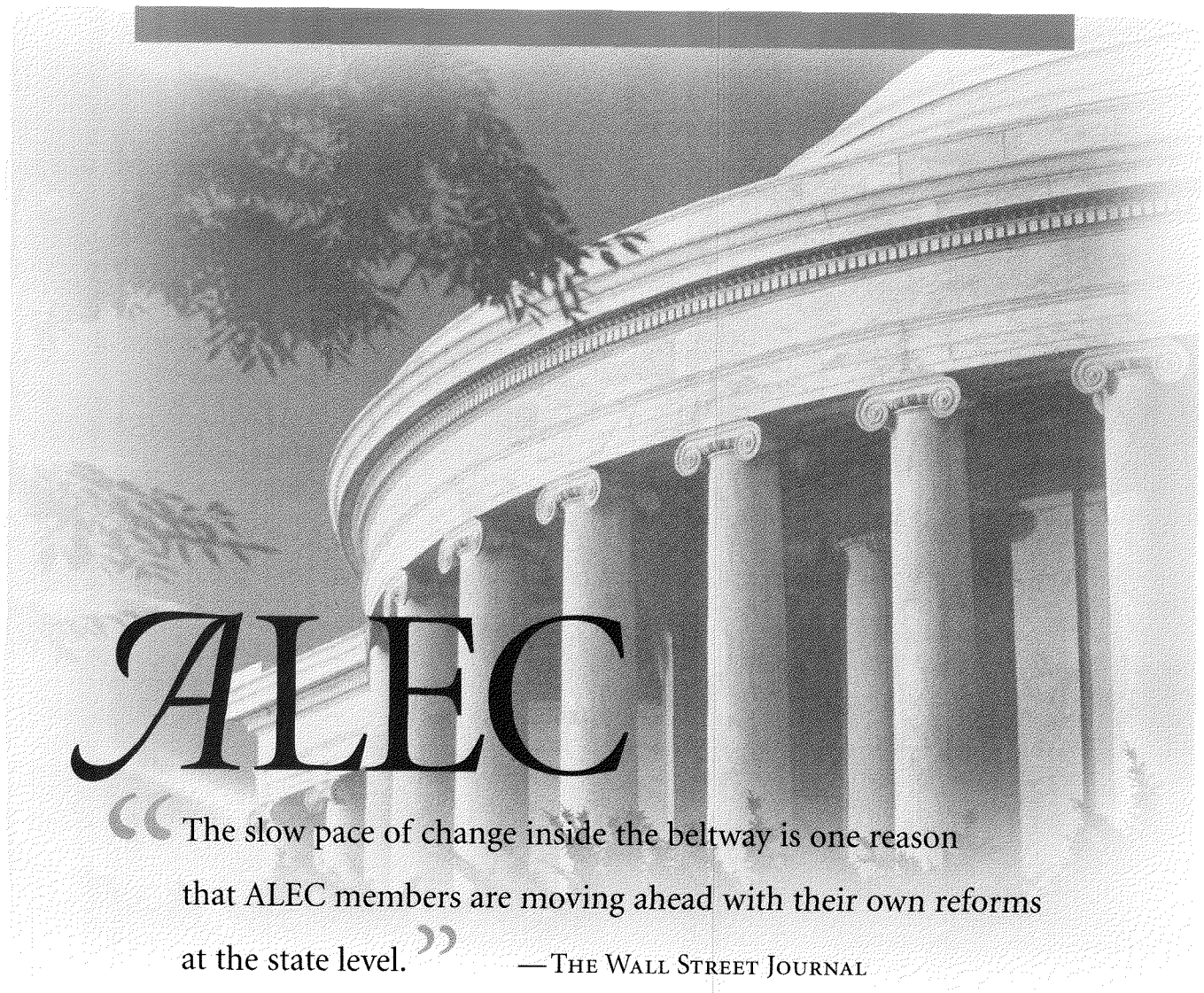

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Environmental Reality

A tidbit from a Bradley Lecture at the American Enterprise Institute, in which Gregg Easterbrook previewed his forthcoming book The Progress Paradox.

Despite the panic-stricken tone of environmental commentary and politics, all environmental trends in the U.S. except for greenhouse-gas accumulation are favorable.

Puget Sound, Chesapeake Bay, Lake Erie, the Hudson River and other important water bodies have gone from imperiled to mainly clean. Boston Harbor, whose filth was ridiculed in a commercial that was pivotal to the 1988 Presidential election, now has water so clear that revelers do ceremonial New Year's Day dips. The Chicago River, described in the Upton Sinclair classic The Jungle as so loaded with filth that chickens actually were seen walking across it, and as recently as the 1970s still badly polluted, today hosts art festivals, boat tours, and dinner cruises.

Since 1970, smog has declined by a third, even as the number of cars has doubled. Acid rain has fallen 65 percent, though the United States now burns twice as much coal. Airborne soot is down substantially. Airborne lead is down 98 percent. Emissions of CFCs have essentially ended.

During the 2000 Presidential campaign, much was made of Houston taking over from Los Angeles as the nation's "smog capital." Commentators did not add that this happened during a period when Houston smog diminished—it's just that L.A. pollution declined even faster, with Los Angeles prevailing in a race of positives. Twenty years ago, Los Angeles averaged 50 "stage one" ozone alerts per year; the city has not had one for the last four years running. This ability to make fantastic strides against pollution even during a period when the regional population was shooting up is a remarkable success story.

Other environmental measures are also positive. Toxic emissions by industry declined 48 percent in the last 15 years. And that's not because our pollution was shipped offshore—petrochemical manufacturers, the main industrial source of toxic emissions, actually increased domestic production during the period.

More than half of all Superfund toxic waste sites are cleaned up, and none imperil public health. Some Superfund sites are now sufficiently harmless to have been declared nature preserves. Rocky Mountain Arsenal outside Denver, where nerve gas was once made, has been a National Wildlife Preserve for 10 years. Eagle and other biologically delicate species thrive there.

Soil losses to agricultural runoff are declining. American water consumption is declining, even as the population expands in the arid Southwest. The wooded acreage of the United States has been expanding. Appalachian forests, expected to be wiped out by acid rain, instead are the healthiest they have been since before the industrial era.

Since the Endangered Species Act reached full implementation in the late 1970s, at most one U.S. animal species has fallen extinct, rather than the thousands predicted, while once-imperiled creatures such as the bald eagle, gray whale, brown pelican, and peregrine falcon have recovered and been "delisted." Writing in 1854, Thoreau lamented that deer were extinct and he would never see one. Now these ungulates wander across suburban lawns from Atlanta to Maine, the North American deer population being greater than when Europeans arrived.

In recent years it has become common to hear of a cancer epidemic, an endocrine-disruptor epidemic, the "poisoning of America," and other dire health circumstances. If we're all being poisoned, our bodies have a strange way of showing it—by living longer and longer. Heart disease and stroke have been declining for decades. U.S. heart disease mortality is now 60 percent lower than in 1950; stroke deaths are down 70 percent in the same period; hypertension is down.

Cancer stopped rising around 1993 and has since fallen slightly, despite continued aging of the population. When alarmists say there is "more cancer than ever before," they mean more total cases—that is, not adjusting for an ever-larger and older population. By this kind of logic there is also now "more baldness than ever before," simply because more people are alive, and living longer.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the average American lifespan was 46 years; now it is 77 years. A 1928 government study forecast that the "natural" lifespan would ultimately rise to the unbelievable level of 65 years. When Social Security was enacted, this estimate was used as the basis for setting the federal retirement age at 65. Lawmakers assumed Social Security would be economical because most people would die without ever receiving a benefit check. Instead, today Americans *average* an extra decade of life beyond what experts thought would be the biological maximum.

Though polls show a majority of the population believes pollution is growing worse, the reality is quite different.

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Saintly No Longer

By Christine Parsons

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA—"Parents, stay behind me and watch for panhandlers!" instructed the petite middle school teacher. She knew the steep, half-mile route from San Francisco's Orpheum Theatre to our dinner spot could get dicey. Darkness had arrived and she didn't want to lose any of her 30 students along the way.

The parent chaperones and children divided into small groups and trekked uphill, past flashing red lights that invited us to come in and see the "Nudes! Live!" I gathered my charges closer, pulling my turtleneck sweater up over my mouth and nose to block the urine stench. A soiled hand reached out from the shadows; its fingernails embedded with black gunk. "Just a dollar…c'mon." I urged my group along. They hesitated. They don't encounter dirt-encrusted, strung-out souls in their neighborhoods, and they were nervous, but some wanted to give the beggar their dinner money.

I picked up the pace, wishing San Francisco resident and Democratic House leader Nancy Pelosi could tag along to explain what her allies have done to this city over the past couple of decades. But I knew what she would say. "Children, the homeless need to exchange their blood-tainted heroin needles for fresh ones. I have provided them with that."

My daughter, sensing my mood as I cleared my throat, shot me a look that said: "If you start in with that political stuff I will never speak to you again." Sadness swept over me for these adolescents who never knew the city before it became a symbol of leftist policies run amok.

My husband, Don, grew up on the San Francisco Peninsula; his family history is rooted in buildings that still stand in the once-vital financial district. Twenty-five years ago we spent part of our honeymoon at the Clift Hotel downtown. We walked for hours, past streams of businessmen and women in dark suits and hats, and corner vendors selling flowers. Aromas pulled us toward Fisherman's Wharf and a lunch of crab plucked out of the Pacific. The streets did not smell of urine then.

Some years later, Don's dad began to warn that "The city's getting crazy." He would jab at his *San Francisco Chronicle* over morning coffee and ask "Why do you want to take the kids to visit there?" We laughed and wondered what he was fussing about.

The years turned to a decade and we noticed subtle changes. A scruffy person here. Another there. Union Square and Powell Street filling with them—the "kooks," as Don's dad called them. City politics had changed, Don's dad would complain, telling us to watch out for that Pelosi and her fedora-wearing sidekick Willie Brown, and that new mayor, Diane Feinstein. My father-in-law and his cronies shook their white-haired heads, fearing what was afoot. Smug yuppies like my husband and myself patted him on the back and shrugged. Hey, what difference did it make if the politicians let dopers hang out in boxes under a bridge? It's a free country.

Eleven years later, Don and I moved to a small town less than an hour from San Francisco. This would be great, we thought. We could hop on BART and go to the city to stuff ourselves on tiny shrimp with fresh squeezed lemon any time we wanted. Again his dad warned us. "It's not the same. Be careful if you go in."

We ignored him, and took our family and some visiting cousins to Pier 39. The beds of bright tulips had burst into bloom, ringing the sidewalk with multi-colored charm. The younger kids wanted to ride the old-fashioned wooden carousel; its organ music called out to them.

A drugged-out, foul-smelling man approached the ride. He wanted on, and his two friends did too. They didn't have tickets and the ticket-taker refused to let them on. The three vagrants ganged up on him, pummeling him into a bloodied mess before security arrived. We stood, as if glued to our spots in line, mouths agape. Our kids whimpered, "Can we go home now?"

The ride out of the city was quiet. The next time the cousins came from Seattle they had only one request: "Don't take us to San Francisco."

Don's dad passed away a few months after we moved here. I thought about him as I shuttled my field trip charges safely onto BART after dinner to ride back out of the city. If he were here now I would listen better, and ask him to tell more stories about his life as a young man in San Francisco at its most promising moment. Before the kooks took over.

Christine Parsons is a lifelong Californian.

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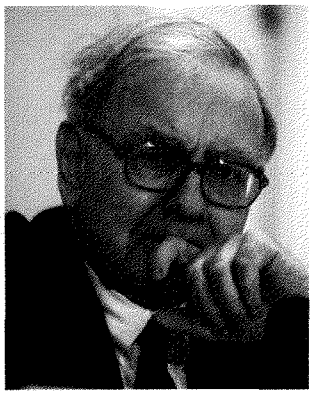
Flashback

To know nothing of what happened before you were born is to remain ever a child—Cicero

Meet Warren Buffett's Daddy



Warren Buffett

Warren Buffett, the legendary investor whose taste for hamburgers and life in Omaha, Nebraska gives him a reputation for Middle American eccentricity in the world of high finance, is just another colorless gray-pinstriper when compared with his father: Rep. Howard Buffett (R-NE), who half a century ago was perhaps the most radical and principled Republican member of Congress.

The Buffetts were pillars of Omaha. Howard Buffett was a stockbroker, "gentle and sweet-natured," in the words of Warren's biographer Roger Lowenstein. His politics, though, were to "the right of God," cracked one local banker.

Buffett was elected to Congress in 1942 with a pledge to keep FDR from "fasten[ing] the chains of political servitude around America's neck." He marked himself an oddball by returning a pay raise to the Treasury and by subjecting each piece of legislation to a simple test: "Will this add to, or subtract from, human liberty?"

Very few House bills passed Howard Buffett's test.

In four non-consecutive terms representing Omaha in the U.S. House of Representatives, the radical backbench Republican compiled an almost purely libertarian record. He opposed whatever New Deal alphabet-soup agencies and Fair Deal bureaucracies emerged from the black lagoon of the Potomac. As the historian Joseph Stromberg has written, "the only [current] member of Congress who bears comparison with Buffett is Ron Paul," the Texas Republican and courageous naysayer.

Buffett was also a strict isolationist, denouncing NATO, conscription, the Marshall Plan ("Operation Rathole"), and the incipient Cold War, which he believed would enchain Americans in "the shackles of regimentation and coercion...in the name of stopping communism."

Foreign aid was a Buffett bugaboo. The story is told that as the family drove past the British Embassy late one night, Howard, seeing the lights still on, quipped, "They even stay up late to think of ways to get our money."

Buffett summed up his views of America and the world in a speech on the House floor condemning the Truman Doctrine: "Even if it were desirable, America is not strong enough to police the world by military force. If that attempt is made, the blessings of liberty will be replaced by tyranny and coercion at home. Our Christian ideals cannot be exported to other lands by dollars and guns. Persuasion and example are the methods taught by the Carpenter of Nazareth, and if we believe in Christianity we should try to advance our ideals by his methods. We cannot practice might and force abroad and retain freedom at home. We cannot talk world cooperation and practice power politics."

Dissent must be its own reward; seldom does it bring promotion. Howard Buffett retired from politics after losing the 1954 Republican Senate nomination to Roman Hruska, who would achieve immortality in 1970, when he defended Nixon's doomed Supreme Court nominee G. Harrold Carswell from charges of "mediocrity" with the immortal effusion, "Even if he were mediocre, there are a lot of mediocre judges and people and lawyers. They are entitled to a little representation, aren't they?"

Even his critics conceded that Howard Buffett was no mediocrity. To *The Nation*, he was "an able young man whose ideas have tragically fossilized." In retirement, he had the good fortune to befriend an energetic young economist named Murray Rothbard, who would in time become the Happy Warrior of the libertarian movement. For years, Rothbard touted the wisdom of Howard, the Buffett who was neither billionaire nor beachbum wasting away again in Margaritaville.

Congressman Buffett's son, while revering Pop as a tower of integrity and honesty, seems not to have inherited the old man's libertarian streak. Warren Buffett is a liberal Democrat whose favorite political causes are legalized abortion and population control.

But surely the father bequeathed the son a confident contrariety, for if Warren Buffett lacks Howard Buffett's politics, he shares his disdain for the eastern citadels of commerce and power, choosing to live in his hometown of Omaha: a radically decentralist act of which Rep. Buffett would have heartily approved.

—Bill Kauffman

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Inside Expert

Global Self-Interest

Allan Meltzer, a professor at Carnegie Mellon University and a visiting scholar at AEI, is the Institute's leading scholar on monetary policy, economic history, and international financial institutions. In February he received AEI's highest honor, the Irving Kristol Award. In his address, Meltzer focused on creating a "pax americana" based on the stabilizing influence of free trade and better-managed international financial institutions, as well as democracy and military strength. He spoke with TAE *senior editor Eli Lehrer and freelance writer Mark Hemingway in Washington, D.C.*

TAE: Multi-nation agreements like NAFTA have advantages when it comes to freeing trade and improving economies, but can cut into national sovereignty. Where do you draw the line between national interests and the global interest?
MELTZER: An international economy needs to gather interests in a harmonious way, not subvert national interests to global interests. For a nation-state to prosper, you have to protect people who are traveling and trading. This allows the market system to form, develop, and grow. In the nineteenth century, if you had a trade disagreement you sent gunboats. Now you send lawyers. It may not be great, but it is better. It's true that international agreements require that we give up some sovereignty. But we should give up only the amount of sovereignty that we want to give up! Do we want the tax laws for the United States to be made in Europe by a non-elected government in Brussels, or by the WTO, rather than by the Congress of the United States or the state legislatures?
TAE: How do you rate the Bush administration's record on trade and international economic development?
MELTZER: They've done quite well on economic development. They've really made an effort to reform the grant and loan-making apparatus to introduce much more incentive and much less command and control. On trade, the progress is mixed. We have new free trade agreements with Singapore and Chile, but at the same time the administration puts tariffs on steel.
TAE: What's wrong with the International Monetary Fund and World Bank?
MELTZER: In short, both the IMF and the World Bank suffer from being largely command-and-control institutions. They say, "We give you the money. We tell you what to do."
TAE: How could they be fixed?
MELTZER: They need to become incentive-driven. They need to say to a country, "If you adopt these reforms, we'll help you if you get into trouble. If you don't adopt these reforms then people who lent you money should know that they're going to lose their money and we won't help you."
TAE: Is any progress being made in the direction of reform?
MELTZER: The International Monetary Fund has gone quite a long way in the right direction. It's developed the Contingent Credit Facility, which says to countries: "If you adopt these reforms we'll lend to you." The World Bank has moved much less in the direction of reform.
TAE: Why is it so hard to sell some observers on the benefits of globalization?
MELTZER: Paul Samuelson, the great economist, was asked which fundamental economic principles were true but not obvious. He answered that the gain from trade was such a principle. The fact that two sides can trade things and have *both* end up better off is not an obvious thing. But that's what globalization is all about. I don't think that people fail to recognize this so much as they deny it—either to protect the jobs of unionized workers in industries where there are others who can produce the goods at a lower price, or because they are simply anti-capitalists and see the market system as evil.
TAE: Do you think the recent criticisms of the U.S. acting without U.N. approval or massive global consensus in Iraq will spill over into international economic institutions now that the war is over?
MELTZER: I think people will pursue their interests and not do things to spite themselves. People around the world depend on us a great deal because we're the most powerful country in the world. They're not going to refuse to trade with us. They're not going to try to disrupt our economy because there is no way they can do so without disrupting their own. Countries, by and large, try to act in what they perceive as their self-interest.

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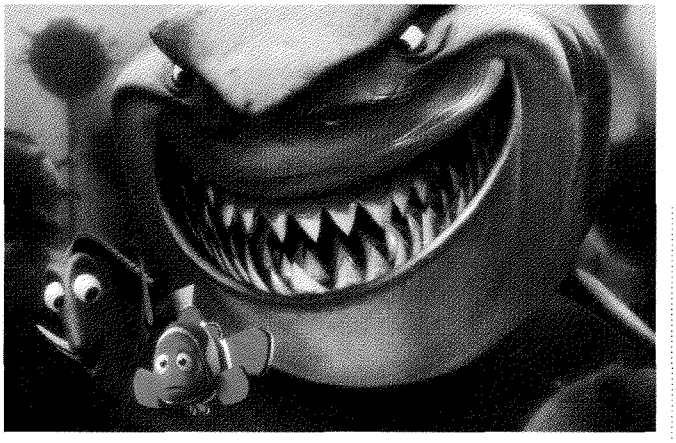
Now Playing

The New Disney?



Disney/Pixar Animation Studio

In terms of size and output, the comparison is ridiculous. Walt Disney Pictures has its fingers everywhere—radio, television, theme parks—and releases more than a dozen movies a year via its various studio divisions. Pixar Animation Studios has completed a total of only five features since its 1995 debut with *Toy Story*—all of which have been distributed by none other than Disney.

Yet in terms of cultural status, Pixar has come to stand for the same things Disney always did, even as the latter's stature appears to be fading. The promise of *Toy Story*—the first computer-animated feature film, and a children's picture of unprecedented creativity and intelligence—was further fulfilled with 1998's *A Bug's Life* and 1999's *Toy Story 2*. By the time 2001's *Monsters, Inc.* rolled around, Pixar had become a household name synonymous with family entertainment at its finest.

All of that could have changed with *Finding Nemo*, the company's latest effort. John Lasseter, a Pixar founder and key creative contributor to all of the studio's previous pictures, has taken a back seat as executive producer, while writer-director Andrew Stanton (who co-wrote each of the earlier films) is on his own for the first time.

On the surface, Stanton isn't working with the strongest material. The story of a timid clown fish (voiced by Albert Brooks) who must traverse the ocean in search of his lost son, *Finding Nemo* lacks the tantalizing high concept—the secret lives of toys, monsters who are afraid of kids—that has given all of the studio's previous pictures their ingenious kick. If Pixar's honeymoon had to end, this could have been the occasion.

What a relief for those of us who appreciate superior children's films—and dread the likes of that fifth Pokemon installment—that *Finding Nemo* is not only good, but ranks close to Pixar's best. As visually audacious as anything the studio has ever done, the film also meets Pixar's rich thematic standards by turning the tables on the concept of a kids' flick. This isn't an eye-popping tale meant to teach a lesson to tykes, but rather a parable for their parents.

Nemo, you see, may have his name in the title, but the real hero of the story is the father, Brooks' Marlin. In a preface that matches the darkest of Disney's fairy tales—something akin to the death of Bambi's mother—Marlin watches helplessly as a barracuda devours his wife and their hundreds of little eggs. One survives. That's Nemo. And Marlin fusses over him with the obsessiveness of an overprotective parent. (It doesn't help that Nemo has one withered fin.)

At its simplest, *Finding Nemo* offers soothing wisdom to moms and dads worried about losing their children to adulthood. It's simple, yet worth savoring. For most parents, children's movies are a way to distract the little ones; here's a picture that will help them contend with the fact that the little ones are growing up.

That is the movie's heart. Surrounding it, you'll find many familiar Pixar elements. *Finding Nemo* has witty humor (Marlin encounters not just ocean predators, but "recovering" sharks trying to leave behind their taste for fish), plenty of adventure (including a race along an ocean current with thrill-seeking tortoises), and dazzling animation. For the most part, Stanton retains Pixar's trademark of sparkling visual clarity, but he isn't afraid to lend the underwater scenes a cloudy veneer. It's the closest the studio has ever come to realism.

If *Finding Nemo* is enjoyed by audiences as much as I expect, Pixar will be one step closer to Disney status. This is its first summer release. Need I remind readers that an annual, excellent animated feature from Disney used to be a staple of the season?

This is not to say that Disney is passé. In the past year alone, Disney has given us the wonder of *Treasure Planet*, the wit of *Lilo & Stitch*, and the wisdom of the live-action family drama *The Rookie*. But these are gems almost incidentally uncovered by what's become a cultural strip-mining company. How else to explain a get-rich-quick scheme like *The Jungle Book 2*?

Disney is no longer the main force elevating children's entertainment. For that there's a new name: Pixar.

—Josh Larsen

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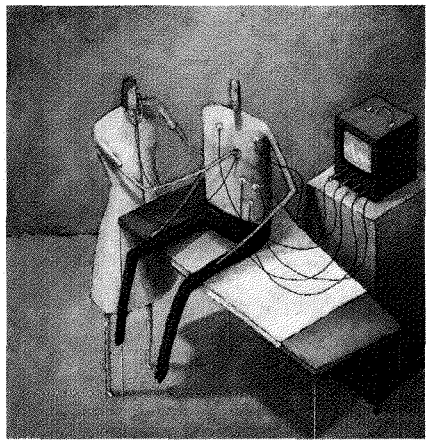
the Medicare Economist



Dangerous Hospitals and Medicare

By Betsy McCaughey

President Bush is looking for ways to save money on Medicare to pay for prescription drug coverage. Here's a life-saving way to do it: He should tell Medicare to insist on quality, and draw the line on paying hospitals with high infection rates and frequent medical errors.

Every single year, close to 100,000 people die from infections they get in the hospital. Medical errors—giving patients the wrong drug, the wrong dose, the wrong organ transplant, even operating on the wrong body part—take thousands more lives. The monetary cost is large, close to $30 billion a year in medical bills, based on data from the Harvard Medical Practices Study. The federal government pays 45 percent of that tab. These infections and medical errors are largely preventable. What's standing in the way of reducing them?

Astoundingly, Medicare. Medicare pays the same fees to hospitals with the best care as it does to those with high infection rates, numerous medical errors, and substandard survival rates. That indifference to quality puts patients at risk and pushes up health care costs. One serious bloodstream infection adds $35,000 to a hospital bill.

Some large employers and insurance companies are taking a new approach: They pay higher rates to hospitals that make lifesaving improvements. The Leapfrog Group, a coalition of large companies, pays a premium to hospitals that require physicians to enter prescriptions in a computerized system rather than scribbling them on a pad, for instance. This helps prevent medication mistakes.

These private-sector efforts can't succeed without Medicare. It alone has the market clout to make hospitals improve.

Unfortunately, Medicare does business with any hospital accredited by the Joint Council on the Accreditation of Health Care Organizations (JCAHO). How tough are JCAHO standards? They're "not likely to give you an idea of the safety and quality of hospitals," says Arthur Levin, director of the Center for Medical Consumers.

The problem is that JCAHO is funded by fees from the hospitals it accredits. Consequently, it doesn't ask questions that hospitals don't want to answer.

In general, JCAHO visits a hospital every three years, and provides several months advance notice. That gives the hospital time to hire consultants to help it pass. JCAHO has created a for-profit company that sells such services for $10,000 a day. That's like Kaplan selling SAT preparation, then giving the test and grading it.

The results? The grades are almost meaningless. A recent study in the journal *Archives of Internal Medicine* showed that hospitals with worse than average rates of medication errors still earned a high JCAHO rating. Similarly, Dr. John Griffith, a University of Michigan public health expert, found no correlation between hospitals with a high JCAHO rating and hospitals with the best survival rates after cardiovascular surgery and other indicators of superior heart care. If all hospitals provided the same cardiovascular care as the top 100 in his study, Griffith estimates, nearly 4,300 lives would be saved each year, and health costs would be $880 million lower.

While Medicare lags, states are leading the way. In 1986, Pennsylvania became the first state to issue report cards comparing how each hospital actually performs: patient survival rates, average length of stay, and cost of treating each disease. (The data are risk-adjusted for fairness to hospitals with sicker patients.) Why doesn't Medicare do that?

In 1997, JCAHO announced a project to measure hospital performance for ten conditions, ranging from heart attacks to pneumonia. Hospitals objected, JCAHO backed down, and hospitals were allowed to pick any two measures, instead of reporting on all ten. Last December Medicare launched a hospital report card with fanfare. But no hospital has to participate. "We know from experience that when reporting is voluntary, the good guys opt in and the bad guys opt out," says Levin.

Hospitals will not lower error rates, reduce infection, and improve care until their biggest customer, Medicare, demands it. Medicare should make it clear: The government won't pay a hospital that has an infection rate double or triple the norm.

Holding hospitals accountable isn't different from holding public schools accountable. Just as no child should be trapped in a failing school, no senior should risk his life in an infection-ridden hospital.

And the money saved will help pay for prescription drugs.

Betsy McCaughey is an adjunct senior fellow at the Hudson Institute and former lieutenant governor of New York.

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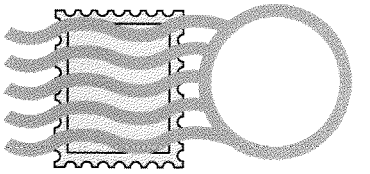

Why We Need Serious Postal Reform

By Rick Geddes

President Bush recently named a nine-member commission to study reform of our Postal Service—the first time a U.S. President has done so since the Johnson Administration. Businesses and consumers relying heavily on the mail—concerned about recent rate increases—are hoping for some dramatic changes, but fear they will get only tinkering. Gene Del Polito, president of the Association for Postal Commerce, recently told *Catalog Age* he expects the commission "is not going to make revolutionary recommendations." He said the committee seems likely to take a cautious path "that preserves the Postal Service as a federal institution but trims its sails."

Bolder and braver changes would make far more sense, however. At some point in the not-too-distant future the Postal Service's structure will *have* to change dramatically. It can be altered deliberately now, by design, or chaotically down the road, by default. The President's commission enjoys a rare opportunity; let's hope its leaders grab their chance.

By almost any standard, the U.S. Postal Service is gigantic. It employs 854,000 people. In 2002 it pulled in $66.5 billion in revenue. It handles about 40 percent of the world's mail. Proper organization of such an entity is clearly important to U.S. economic health.

The United States Postal Service (replacing the Post Office Department) was created by the Postal Reorganization Act of 1970. While that act had several goals, its main focus was on achieving independence for the new entity, both financially and managerially. The USPS was given power to negotiate wages, set prices with regulatory oversight, borrow from the Treasury, and independently sue and be sued. The USPS was exempted from federal, state, and local taxes, and granted the power of eminent domain (allowing it to condemn property for its own use). The Postal Service was expected to become financially self-sufficient and break even over time. The Act retained two key elements of the Post Office's structure, however: It retained a monopoly over letter delivery (as well as use of the mailboxes), and it remained government owned.

The new structure was clearly an improvement over the old Post Office. The productivity of the Postal Service improved. The cost of the postal system was shifted onto mail users and away from direct taxpayer subsidies. The Postal Service was, in many ways, operated in a more businesslike manner.

But the reorganization also failed in important ways. It failed to reduce cross subsidies from monopolized classes of mail to other forms of delivery where private companies compete with the Postal Service (in fact, it appears to have exacerbated them). Contrary to the express aim of the reorganization act, postal wages rose above private sector wages. Although direct costs to the Treasury fell, recurring deficits dissipated taxpayers' equity in the Post Office—the Postal Service's net worth is now *negative* $1.36 billion, down from positive $1.7 billion when the Postal Service began in 1971.

The Postal Service now appears to be undergoing a slow-motion train wreck. In 2002, for the first time in recent history, the number of pieces of first-class mail delivered actually declined. First-class mail provides over 57 percent of the Postal Service's total mail income, and last year's decline snatched away $607 million, or 1.7 percent of the Postal Service revenue. The Postal Service's other big mail class is standard mail, mostly advertising items, accounting for almost 25 percent of mail income. The number of standard mail pieces delivered last year fell 3 percent, while revenues from that class increased slightly due to rate hikes.

The Postal Service is undergoing a slow-motion train wreck.

Other mail classes also showed declines. The number of priority mail pieces dropped a precipitous 10.7 percent. The number of express mail pieces tumbled by 8.6 percent. The number of periodicals mailed declined by 1.8 percent. The number of packages mailed declined by 1.6 percent. International airmail pieces were off a whopping 15.4 percent. Unsurprisingly, the Postal Service's financial condition has suffered. Despite double-digit rate increases, its net loss in 2002 was $700 million, on top of a $1.7 billion loss in 2001.

In the 33 years since the Postal Service was born, momentous technological innovations like e-mail, faxes, and inexpensive telephone services have transformed communications. Continuing changes are likely to cause further declines in the demand for physical mail delivery. Further postage increases are not the solution, since they will only encourage additional substitution of alternate communication methods. Nor is simple deregulation of the Postal Service in its current form a viable alterna-

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tive, as that would only encourage the Postal Service to use its monopoly powers, tax exemptions, and access to government borrowing to drive away competing private firms.

We are at a decisive moment in U.S. postal history. Inexorable technological and commercial demands cannot be addressed through minor alterations in the postal bureaucracy. The model of an independent government-owned agency enjoying a legally enforced monopoly is inappropriate for the United States today. The Bush commission should recommend a bold departure from the outdated 1970 model.

Apologists for the Postal Service's monopoly say that it allows guaranteed letter delivery to all communities. But there is no logical link between universal service and enforced monopoly. All firms facing competition have a strong business incentive to provide service to every community. Because customers prefer dealing with a firm that has a universal delivery network over one that does not, universal service is an important competitive asset. That's why today's private delivery firms stress that they "go anywhere" when advertising their services. They may lose money on particular delivery routes, but have a strong incentive to maintain universal service nevertheless for its overall business value.

The experience of other countries that have eliminated their postal monopolies shows that competition does not harm universal service. Sweden and New Zealand, both with remote hinterlands, have eliminated their postal monopolies. Delivery service to rural areas has been maintained.

The arguments for a delivery monopoly that assume the cost of rural service is significantly higher than for urban delivery are based on a false premise. If rural communities fear losing letter delivery service in a competitive market, the government can simply contract with particular firms with the proviso that they maintain universal service. The benefits of a postal monopoly are approximately zero, and its costs are numerous.

The second major oversight of the 1970 reform was leaving the Postal Service under government ownership. It is useful to remember that most members of the last commission to study postal reform, in 1968, believed that the Postal Service would be better off investor-owned. Only fear of strikes, and worry that the Post Office's earnings record would not attract buyers, prevented a recommendation of full privatization.

Other large postal services have recently been privatized, to great success, in places like Germany and Holland. Investors would snap up U.S. postal shares.

The attractiveness of a private Postal Service to investors depends on the institutional arrangements made before any public offering—regarding pension liabilities and employee costs, for instance. There is no reason why those arrangements cannot be made attractive to investors. When the Deutsche Post was offered in a large privatization, investors clamored for eight times more shares than were actually available. The Dutch post office was privatized in a similar way. Other large previously government-owned firms have recently been privatized to great success, including British Telecom and Deutsche Telekom. Investors would snap up U.S. postal shares.

When a firm lacks private owners, it is unclear to whom it should be accountable. The deepest problem of the U.S. Postal Service is that it lacks accountability to any specific group. That dissipates incentive to increase earnings by cutting costs and maximizing revenues. Under privatization, the Postal Service would be accountable to a clearly defined group: stockholders.

Other network industries like trucking, natural gas, airlines, and railroads were de-monopolized in the 1970s and 1980s. This created huge benefits for consumers. But what about the *providers* of delivery services at today's Postal Service? Many postal workers have built their careers on expectations of a government-owned post, and the transition to a competitive market may disrupt those careers. It thus seems appropriate that in addition to selling shares in the equity markets, postal workers should receive shares in a new investor-owned entity.

The issuance of ownership shares to postal workers and managers is a case where fairness and economic efficiency are aligned: Employees would receive compensation for the disruption of their previous work patterns. And the new accountability of private ownership would improve efficiency and incentives to innovate, control costs, improve service, issue new products, and become more responsive to customers' needs.

Such an ownership transition would require institutional changes. The Postal Service would have to be given freedom to spin off or shut down under-performing sectors, and to make other prudent business decisions, such as the closing of unprofitable post offices. It may wish to replace them with counter services at other outlets, for example grocery stores or gas stations.

It must also be relieved of the privileges and immunities it now enjoys, such as special borrowing privileges and exemption from taxation and the antitrust laws. It would also face the same disclosure requirements facing any publicly traded firm. Any aspect of government sponsorship or preference must be eliminated.

Without major reform, serious losses and problems at the U.S. Postal Service will continue. Selling ownership shares would create enormous benefits. Postal employees would gain a stake in their firm, and become accountable to a clearly defined group. Managers would likewise be held to meaningful measures of firm performance. The Postal Service would finally have the incentive to keep costs down—and to respond to the millions of customers who are now captively dependent on it.

Economist Rick Geddes is an assistant professor at Cornell University and an adjunct scholar at the American Enterprise Institute.

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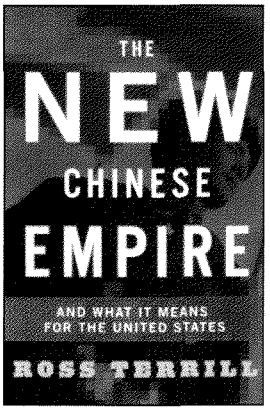
BookTalk

CHINA VS. FOGGY BOTTOM

By John Derbyshire

The New Chinese Empire: And What It Means for the United States
By Ross Terrill
Basic Books, 432 pages, $30



Thirty years ago, the catch-phrase in political science circles was that people who studied the Soviet Union hated the object of their studies, while people specializing in modern China loved the object of theirs. There was truth in that. While the horrors of the Mao dictatorship did not go entirely unnoticed, even specialists tended to give the Chinese Communist Party the benefit of the doubt until well into the 1970s. Only when Simon Leys lifted the lid with his 1977 book *Chinese Shadows* was the true horror of Maoism exposed to the general public. Among casual observers—a category that unfortunately includes most Western politicians—illusions persisted for much longer.

As Chris Patten, the last British governor of Hong Kong, put it, there is still a widespread feeling that China is "a Ming vase," to be handled carefully and reverently, and that Chinese sensibilities, as defined by her rulers, must be accorded the most exquisite and punctilious deference. The fact that Taiwan and mainland China are under two different governments is spoken of in polite diplomatic circles as a case of a nation tragically divided. The fact that Outer and Inner Mongolia are likewise under two different regimes—the first an independent nation, the second a Chinese colony—cannot be mentioned for fear of upsetting those fragile and combustible Chinese sensibilities.

This deference allows the Chinese communists to get away with murder—literally. While American Presidents and senior officials pass the Ming vase from hand to hand with utmost care, China's best and bravest suffer and die in labor camps. In *The New Chinese Empire*, Ross Terrill describes such disgraces as Jiang Zemin's carefully scripted 1997 "news conference" at Harvard University, where embarrassing questions were screened out in advance. Terrill sums up Bill Clinton's return visit to China the next year very succinctly: "Beijing played the American President like a violin." The violin recital goes on today: The author relates a conversation he had with State Secretary Colin Powell, two months after his 2001 visit to Beijing. Powell described the trip as "Excellent...very encouraging." As Terrill demonstrates, the Powell visit was yet another game, set and match, for the communists.

How do China's communists get away with it? This penetrating and angry book supplies the answers. A large part of their success is simply due to a high level of skill in managing their situation. Statecraft has been a Chinese obsession since ancient times. The everyday Chinese language is riddled with proverbs and idioms from great diplomats and strategists of past times. If you look closely at this huge body of lore, a surprising amount of it deals with managing one's own weakness. China, though a great civilization, has not always been a great nation. Often, she has been weak or divided. The art of preserving one's state, or state-fragment, in such times—of "turning weakness into strength"—has been the subject of intensive study by the Chinese across a score of centuries. China knows how to leverage weakness. As Terrill describes:

> Surprisingly, U.S.-China ties were smoother under Reagan than under Clinton. This was not because Reagan was better disposed toward the values of Chinese communism than was Clinton! Rather it was because, with his military buildup and other signs of strength, Reagan was perceived in Beijing as a leader who would not readily back down. The Chinese state, which for 2000 years has known when and how to retreat, compromised with Reagan. With Clinton, who wavered and pecked intermittently at China policy, Beijing simply pushed for more and more.

China's approach to statecraft is different in fundamental ways from what Westerners are used to. This approach perplexes and confuses our officials in their dealings with the Chinese. Much of it arises from the internalized Chinese

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confidence that even when their nation has been subjugated or divided, it has always hung together as a civilization, and as a civilization the Chinese have been dominant in their region in a way that no Western nation has ever been. Terrill points out some of the odd consequences: China today has no friends, nor even any allies, yet doesn't seem to mind. The blustering and arrogance of tone that Beijing affects toward other nations has the same source. Likewise the mix of whining self-pity and angry grievance that Chinese authorities bring to all discussions of their own recent history.

All this and much more is laid out for inspection in *The New Chinese Empire*, with many keen insights and memorable phrases. Terrill summarizes that, "Beijing wants to be in Asia what Washington is in Latin America." He masterfully describes the full nature of Chinese ambitions, their deep historical roots, and the coming developments that will thwart them.

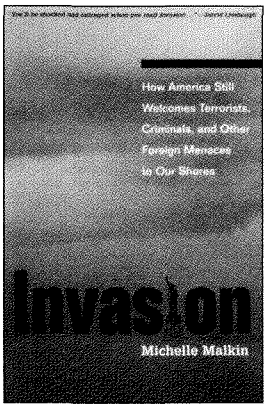
Terrill also suggests that in the face of coming disappointment, China's "Pretentious, Aggrieved, and Fearful State will segue into the Vengeful State." I fear he is correct, and that dire results could follow. There is no sign that we are capable of managing the Chinese with the same skill they have applied in manipulating us, nor even that our statesmen are aware that they are being manipulated and bamboozled by grand masters of ancient statecraft. I hope that Terrill's book will find a place on State Department reading lists.

John Derbyshire is a contributing editor to National Review. *His most recent book is* Prime Obsession, *on the Riemann Hypothesis.*

IMMIGRATION MUCKRAKER

By Susanna Dokupil

Invasion: How America Still Welcomes Terrorists, Criminals, and Other Foreign Menaces to Our Shores
By Michelle Malkin
Regnery Publishing, 256 pages, $27.95



In *Invasion,* Michelle Malkin contends that America's porous immigration system allows terrorists into the country. Blaming "ethnicity lobbyists, corporations, the travel industry, and open-borders activists" for pressuring lawmakers to facilitate entry into the country, she believes tighter immigration laws, and better enforcement of existing ones, could help prevent terrorism.

As Malkin points out, both legal and illegal immigrants have brought terror to American soil. If the guardians of America's golden door can separate honest, hard-working applicants from troublemakers, the U.S. would be a better place to live. Unfortunately, the process is not always easy.

Invasion highlights several obvious problems with the current immigration system, including lax security at airports, seaports, and border crossings, marriage fraud, asylum fraud, and lax visa standards. Malkin provides detailed examples of individuals who exploited the system and immigration officials who could not or would not do their jobs correctly. Her illustrations, fleshed out in harrowing detail, read like episodes of "60 Minutes" or "Hard Copy."

But her anecdotal style, which makes the book so eminently readable, sometimes fails to establish a full context for these stories. Take her discussion of Angel Resendiz. Resendiz, the "Railway Killer," entered the country illegally and racked up an extensive criminal record, including a dozen brutal murders. Although caught and deported multiple times, Resendiz continued to re-enter the country because he was not properly entered into the criminal database system. Malkin is certainly correct that INS agents cost lives this way.

But her 20-page account of his brutal crimes lacks statistics on what percentage of convicted violent criminals in recent years were illegal aliens. She does report that the INS regularly omits criminals from its database of recidivists, but it is not clear whether the Resendiz incident is an aberration or a common occurrence.

Another weakness of the book is Malkin's failure to address counter-arguments. She notes that 9/11 hijacker Ahmed Alghamdi overstayed his student visa, then suggests that tracking students who hold such visas would help prevent terrorism. Though her criticism is perfectly reasonable, she doesn't consider any reasons why such tracking might be undesirable. She merely ascribes fault for the government's failure to implement such a program to "special interests who were in stubborn denial about our vulnerability to murderous terrorists in students' clothing."

Malkin favors visa requirements for *any* travel to the U.S., and better inspections of ships to catch stowaways. She calls for a complete moratorium on visas for Muslim clerics, individuals from al-Qaeda-friendly countries, and high-tech workers (Muslim charities have tried to exploit the special program that brings them in). She wants to get tough with illegal aliens, detaining some at military bases, using soldiers to police our wide-open borders with Mexico and Canada, and abolishing all efforts to provide blanket amnesties to illegals.

Of course, law enforcement officials still wouldn't catch a terrorist with a proper visa and a previously clean criminal record—like Richard Reid, the "shoe bomber" from the U.K. And Malkin doesn't consider the costs of her reforms, not in implementation, nor in their effect on economy and society. She dismisses opponents who ob-ject to the expense of an immigration crackdown. Her arguments would have been strengthened by some explicit cost-benefit analysis.

Invasion offers an emotional appeal on an important topic. Had Malkin provided more hard, systematic evidence, she might have converted more of the unconvinced.

Susanna Dokupil is an attorney in Houston, and a regular contributor to TAEmag.com.

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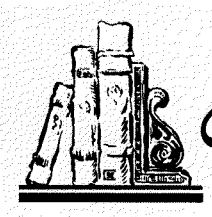

Off The Shelf

Classic, overlooked, newly relevant, or otherwise deserving older books

HAIL CAPTAIN KIRK

By Gerald Russello

The Conservative Mind: From Burke to Eliot (1953)
By Russell Kirk

Russell Kirk's classic text *The Conservative Mind: From Burke to Eliot* turns 50 this year. Kirk's civilized polemic has persuaded generations of conservatives that they are not alone in their political instincts. Recently, C-SPAN paired Kirk with William F. Buckley, Jr. in an episode of its acclaimed "American Writers" series as founders of American conservatism.

Seen from the post-Reagan, post-Berlin Wall, post-Fox News era, it may be hard to see what the fuss was about when this book was first published. Conservative pundits are now easy to find, conservative books regularly climb the bestseller lists, and influential think tanks promote conservative positions. But in 1953 Kirk was almost alone, and his discovery of an Anglo-American conservative tradition was a major intellectual event. Publications from *Time* to the *New York Times Book Review* discussed this polished dissertation from a young Michigan scholar fresh from St. Andrew's University in Scotland.

The book is an assault on every liberal piety of the 1950s, from urban renewal to the inevitability of a socialist future, from a limitless notion of "rights" to the belief that a tolerable society could survive without faith and community. It suggested that political liberalism had brought "the decay of manners, the corruption of morals, the discontent of a proletarian population [and] the mass-mind that is the consequence of intellectual vulgarization." The surest way to preserve freedom and prosperity, Kirk argued, was to revive older conservative perspectives. The book is also an extended reflection on our British heritage. Kirk identified the places in Britain's history in which our traditions of ordered liberty, free markets, respect for custom, and individual freedom are rooted.

The introduction, "The Idea of Conservatism," is perhaps the best-known part of the book. Common wisdom in the '50s held that conservatism had no guiding ideals, but merely defended whatever existed. Kirk, however, identified six basic principles that united most conservatives: a belief in a transcendent order; affection for the variety and mystery of human existence; conviction that society requires classes; belief that freedom and property are closely linked; faith in custom and convention; and a recognition that change for its own sake is not reform. Kirk answered the strongest criticism of conservatism by explaining that these principles were not mere defenses of the status quo but the flexible supports of a stable social order. Conservatives now had a baseline of principle against which to measure liberal ideology and policy.

But principles are worthless without individuals to act on them. Accordingly, Kirk devotes the remainder of the book to a series of biographies tracing conservatism from 1789. There was not one "conservative mind" but many, because Kirk thought conservatism was a "mode of regarding the civil social order" rather than an ideological grid. The great conservative thinkers were concerned with "the regeneration of spirit and character—with the perennial problem of the inner order of the soul, the restoration of the ethical understanding and the religious sanction upon which any life worth living is founded." The variety of means through which they sought to preserve what he called the "Permanent Things" demonstrated that change and imagination were not antithetical to conservatism.

In many ways *The Conservative Mind* is a dialogue between the heirs of Edmund Burke and those of Rousseau, in whose thought Kirk finds the origins of modernity. Rousseau and his epigones tried to eliminate the need for order in favor of a vague belief in human goodness or social engineering. As Burke saw, that way leads to the guillotine. The succeeding years have seen any number of disastrous Rousseauian projects while conservatives like John Adams and Benjamin Disraeli tried, with some success, to defend against the latter-day *philosophes*.

All but one of the conservatives discussed in this book are British or American; Tocqueville is the sole European. Literary and political topics receive equal emphasis, with Kirk devoting space to the essays of Paul Elmer More and the poetry of Samuel Taylor Coleridge alongside his look at the French Revolution or the Reform Bill of 1832. Imagination, and sentiments of love and affection, often count for more than "defecated rationality," Kirk believed. Therefore, Kirk presents Disraeli and Burke as much as writers as politicians, and later editions of his classic end with T. S. Eliot, who used radical poetry to convey conservative truths.

The *Conservative Mind* presciently predicts liberalism's struggles in the 1980s and early '90s. Kirk locates liberalism's fatal weakness in its inability to inspire loyalty or real affection, because of its obsession with liberation from every social or cultural constraint. Anti-Americanism, class politics, and destructive individualism make liberalism unattractive to normal citizens.

The *Conservative Mind* started a conversation over what it means to be a conservative, and its lessons will always be needed.

Gerald Russello writes from Brooklyn.

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Edited by Eli Lehrer

the Digest

Summaries of important new research from the nation's universities, think tanks, and investigative publications

BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS

A Boon Awaiting

Anne Swope, et al. *Introducing the Homeland Investment Act*, J. P. Morgan, April 2003 (morganmarkets.com)

There is a tax reform that is relatively simple and low in cost, yet might have a positive effect on the United States economy as great as President Bush's tax plans, say four researchers from a leading investment house. The plan, called the Homeland Investment Act, would tweak American tax laws to make it easier for companies to reinvest profits earned abroad.

Currently, if a U.S. corporation owns a foreign subsidiary that makes a profit and wishes to pay back those profits to the American firm as a dividend, the federal government taxes the dividend at a 35 percent rate. This provides a huge disincentive to firms to bring their money back to the U.S. Consequently, foreign profits are most often used to reinvest in foreign countries. Our tax policy thus pushes American companies to invest abroad rather than at home.

The Homeland Investment Act would allow firms to repatriate foreign earnings at a reduced tax rate of 5.25 percent for one year. The Joint Committee on Taxation examined a similar proposal in 2001 and estimated that it would stimulate repatriation of about $135 billion, at a net reduction of U.S. tax revenues of $4 billion over ten years. (Tax revenues would actually increase in the first year as a result of a large stream of earnings coming back to the U.S.)

Swope and other J. P. Morgan analysts believe that today's tax cost might run as high as $8 billion but that over $500 billion in American earnings now lies offshore. Of that, they believe some $300 to $350 billion would be repatriated into the U.S. as a result of the Act's incentives. This money would either be invested in new plants, research and development, or be used to shore up the balance sheets of companies—creating greater market confidence. In the long term, the Morgan team calculates, these results would strengthen the economy and more than make up for any lost tax revenues. —Iain Murray

Doing De Luxe

Michael Silverstein and Neil Fisk, "Luxury for the Masses," in *Harvard Business Review*, April 2003 (harvardbusinessonline.org)

In recent years, many middle income Americans have begun buying luxury goods—ranging from Mercedes automobiles to $3.50 cups of coffee—which were once the province of the rich alone. Silverstein, a marketing consultant, and Fiske, CEO of an upscale cosmetics chain, argue that a number of trends are driving consumption of prestigious products by great numbers of people, or what they call "massteige." Among these:

Changes in retailing: Globalized trade coupled with large chain stores has allowed manufacturers and retailers to achieve economies of scale on products that once were affordable only to the rich. New niches for large-scale premium retailers like Williams-Sonoma and Crate and Barrel have opened up.

Smarter consumers: Increased travel and education has given Americans a better understanding of high-quality goods.

Changes in family life: Smaller families, increased numbers of women in the work force, and many more one- and two-person households have tended to increase discretionary spending.

Middle class affluence: Economic growth has left people in the middle of the income spectrum with more money to spend on luxury goods. Lower prices for necessities thanks to discount retailers have also given middle-income people more money to play with.

To take advantage of these new trends Silverstein and Fisk recommend that retailers pay close attention to their customers, attempt to educate them in the benefits of improved products, continually innovate, and work to

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educate opinion-makers. Above all, retailers should be aware that "New luxury consumers are so knowledgeable, affluent, and selective" that the classic view of the "passive" consumer "has become obsolete."

NATIONAL SECURITY

We Don't Need the U.N.

Joshua Muravchik, "We Are Better Off Without that U.N. Resolution," *AEI On The Issues*, March 21, 2003 (aei.org)

Writing two days after international coalition forces began their campaign to liberate Iraq, AEI scholar Joshua Muravchik contends that the United States "dodged a bullet" by not seeking U.N. Security Council authorization for the war. Muravchik points out that the main reason why nations like France and Russia often exalt the Security Council's importance is that they have so little power (military or otherwise) relative to the United States.

Muravchik observes that the requirement for a Security Council mandate was never established in international law. During the Cold War, NATO, for example, functioned on the assumption that the U.S. and other Western nations would act to repulse a Soviet advance into Europe *without* the approval of the Security Council. "American power does much more than the Security Council to preserve the peace," he writes.

When the Security Council has acted—as in Korea and the 1991 Gulf War, it has largely relied on American force to do its bidding. Muravchik also points out that the Security Council failed to act to avert massive slaughter in Rwanda or in the former Yugoslavia when international action might have averted humanitarian disasters. The real losers in a world where the U.S. needs Security Council approval for its actions would not be America but, rather, other nations that rely on U.S. protection and aid.

"The world would be anything but safer if a principle became enshrined that deterred the U.S. from defending Taiwan without Beijing's permission, or Poland without Russia's, or Israel without the assent of the U.N.," he observes.

Our Admired Military

David King and Zachary Karabell, *The Generation of Trust: How the U.S. Military Has Regained the Public's Confidence Since Vietnam*, AEI Press, March 2003 (aei.org)

While Baby Boomers, reared in the Vietnam era, remain skeptical of the American military, Americans' overall esteem for the armed services has never been higher. In public opinion surveys, the military ranks above other parts of government, churches, universities, and hospitals. In this AEI book, David King, a Harvard University professor, and Zachary Karabell, a New York City economic analyst, examine how the military transformed itself from the weak, dispirited, and ineffective force of the 1970s to the powerful and respected institution of today. The two focus on improved performance, professionalism, and persuasion tactics the military employed to boost morale and public esteem.

Performance: In the wake of Vietnam and other high-profile traumas, the military has performed better. It has succeeded in every major mission since the early 1980s. The authors attribute these successes to improved staffing and strengthened lines of communication—which indirectly led to the emergence of politician-generals like Colin Powell.

Professionalism: Following the withdrawal of the last American troops from Vietnam in 1973, the military abolished the draft. Since then, the military has had more success in combating problems such as drug use and racial tensions than American society as a whole has enjoyed.

Affirmative action programs for African Americans have likewise been more successful than similar efforts in the private sector. While sexual tensions remain rife in the military, the services give the impression of acting resolutely when problems arise. "The military has earned a reputation as the one government institution that can and does accomplish its professional goals with (relative) competence," the two write.

Persuasion: As part of the shift to an all-volunteer force, the military worked hard to improve the public image of those who fight. Recruitment advertising targets children from middle school on, presenting the military (accurately) as a reasonable, financially attractive alternative to college or civilian employment.

For the broader public, cooperation with Hollywood movie producers created an appealing depiction of military life that was only reinforced by the military's unchallenged victory in the first Gulf War.

The two authors conclude with a tinge of doubt, noting that the Hollywood-style persuasion and clean push-button wars may fade from the public's mind when and if the United States embarks on a war that involves very heavy casualities.

OTHER COUNTRIES

After Bin Laden

Ruven Paz, "The Endless Global Jihad: Are They Looking for the Post-Bin Laden Era?" Project for the Research of Islamist Movements, March 2003 (gloria.idc.ac.il/Islam)

Osama bin Laden has not appeared in public for several years and has not been seen on camera since the fall of 2001. Based on literature distributed by Islamist extremists, Ruven Paz, a former officer in Israel's Shin Bet internal security agency, argues that terrorist organizations bent on

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destroying the West will continue with or without bin Laden's presence.

Paz quotes a prominent Libyan terror supporter saying that *jihadists* "do not need the existence of bin Laden" to complete a global war on "Jews and Crusaders." Another Islamist Paz cites says recent arrests and killings of high-level operatives from al-Qaeda should not enervate terrorism, because a degree of suffering "is the price of glory, victory, and power." Supporters of Islamist ideologies will continue to direct operations against the West even without bin Laden around to call the shots.

On the other hand, Paz sees the possibility that the decimated leadership of *Qa'idat al-Jihad* (the name al-Qaeda's supporters now use to refer to the organization) may cause the current structure of the *jihad* to crumble. Danger, however, has not vanished. The dismantling of *Qa'idat al-Jihad* could inspire a shift from global *jihad* to more local attacks across the Arab world, in Central Asia, in Southeast Asia.

One result could be an increase in attacks on governments in the Islamic world, with the goal of establishing new sovereign bases from which the war against the United States and its allies might be reinvigorated.

In either case, Paz believes, bin Laden's tactics and ideology will not vanish any time soon. In fact, due to Islamist groups' increasing use of the Internet, they may actually reach a broader audience than ever before.

SOCIETY

Keep Your Eyes on the Road

Andrea Glaze and James Ellis, "Pilot Study of Distracted Drivers," Center for Public Policy, Virginia Commonwealth University, January 2003 (vcu.edu/cppweb)

In a first-ever study of the causes of driver distraction, Andrea Glaze and James Ellis find that distractions outside of involved vehicles cause most distracted-driver crashes. While Virginia (where the data were collected) bans talking on mobile phones without special equipment during driving, portable phones were a factor in less than 4 percent of the crashes noted.

Driver fatigue, the leading cause of crashes overall, resulted in 17 percent of all incidents studied. Drivers watching traffic events outside of their own vehicles—often other car crashes—were implicated in about 13 percent of all crashes. About 10 percent of other crashes involved drivers trying to look at scenery or landmarks. Altogether, about a third of all distracted-driver crashes involved watching something outside the vehicle.

Among distractions inside vehicles, adjusting the controls on a radio or C.D. player caused crashes at a rate 50 percent higher than talking on mobile phones. Alcohol was a factor in less than 3 percent of all crashes.

The researchers also studied drivers who stopped to look at a yard sale, were distracted by unrestrained pets, and reached for food.

SCIENCE AND MEDICINE

Brain Sex

Simon Baron-Cohen, *The Essential Difference: The Truth about the Male and Female Brain*, Perseus Publishing, July 2003 (perseus.co.uk)

Autism is a complex brain disorder that afflicts victims with moderate to severe problems in communications and social interaction, without affecting underlying intellect in most cases. Simon Baron-Cohen, a professor of experimental psychology at the University of Cambridge, is one of the world's leading authorities on autism. In his new book, he tries to explain autism on the basis of men and women having significantly different types of brains: Women's brains, he believes, are hard-wired for empathy while men's brains find their strengths in understanding and building systems.

He defines these two types as Empathizing (E) and Systemizing (S) brains. Some people have a female brain, others a male brain, and others, a mix. His evidence comes from a variety of sources: Behavioral observation (especially of children), psychological examination, and neurological tests, including experiments involving hormones.

Together, these results provide enough evidence for Baron-Cohen to argue that men and women think differently. He believes that patterns in human society which some attribute to sexism are, in fact, the result of genetic hard-wiring. He points out that "Some occupations are almost entirely male. Think of metal-working, weapon-making, crafting musical instruments, or the construction industries, such as boat-building. The focus of these occupations is on constructing systems." (Boys once described as "geeks" now often are diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome, a mild form of autism.) Though they are different, Baron-Cohen notes, the male and female brain types each have their own strengths and weaknesses.

Baron-Cohen's research also gives significant insight into autism: He believes the syndrome is an extreme example of the systemizing male brain at work. The data support his conclusion: Autistic boys outnumber autistic girls by seven to one. Baron-Cohen urges that teachers become more aware of male/female brain differences, and more accepting and tolerant of the needs of the extreme male brain. And he suggests that an extreme form of the female brain may also exist, with its own problems.

—Iain Murray

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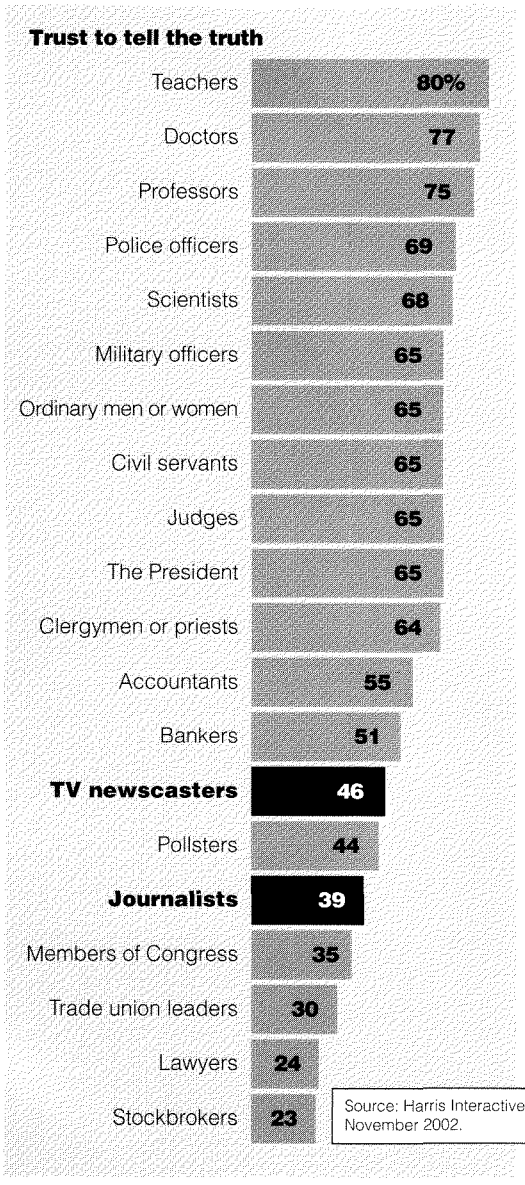
Opinion Pulse

Edited by Karlyn Bowman

A Not-So-Great Media Report Card

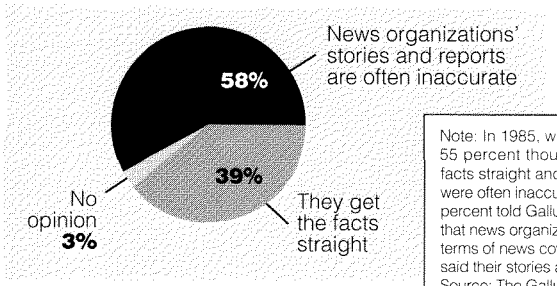
The next three pages provide an overview of attitudes about the media. Around four in ten Americans say they trust journalists and TV newscasters to tell the truth. A solid majority believe that news organizations' stories are often inaccurate; around four in ten say they get their facts straight. Nearly six in ten say that the media get in the way of helping society solve its problems; 35 percent say the media help solve society's problems. People say that the news media have too much power and influence—and that their influence is growing.

Question: Would you generally trust each of the following types of people ...?



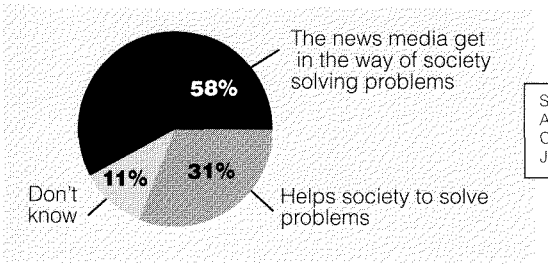
Source: Harris Interactive, November 2002.

Question: In general, do you think...?



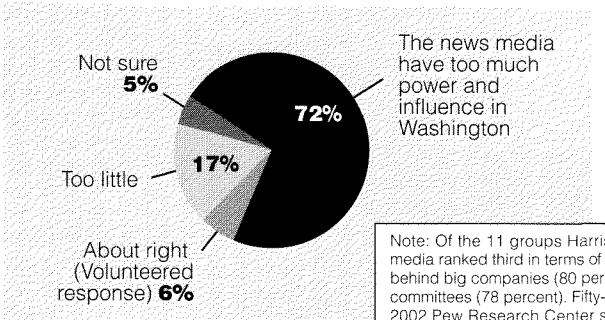
Note: In 1985, when Gallup asked this question, 55 percent thought news organizations got the facts straight and 34 percent thought their stories were often inaccurate. In March of this year, 59 percent told Gallup, CNN, *USA Today* interviewers that news organizations got their facts straight in terms of news coverage of Iraq, and 38 percent said their stories and reports were often inaccurate.
Source: The Gallup Organization, February 2003.

Question: Which of the following two statements about the news media do you agree with more...?



Source: Princeton Survey Research Associates for the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, July 2002.

Question: And now a question about the power of different groups in influencing government policy, politicians, and policy makers in Washington. Do you think...?



Note: Of the 11 groups Harris inquired about, the media ranked third in terms of having too much power, behind big companies (80 percent) and political action committees (78 percent). Fifty-seven percent in a July 2002 Pew Research Center survey said the term "growing in influence" applied to news organizations; 29 percent said "declining in influence" did.
Source: Harris Interactive, February 2003.

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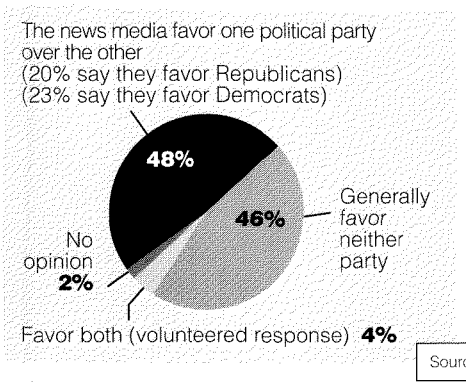
Media Practices: A Bill of Particulars

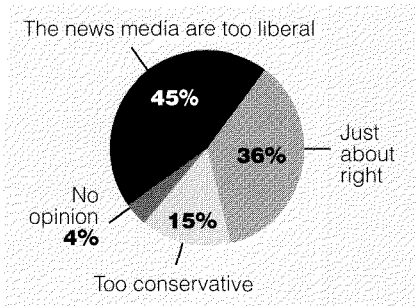
Forty-eight percent of those surveyed by Gallup believe that the news media favor one political party over the other while 46 percent say they favor neither party. Majorities say news organizations protect democracy and stand up for America, but they also say that they don't care about the people they cover and try to cover up their mistakes. When people were told about the information CNN withheld from the American public in order to continue reporting from Iraq, 58 percent said the network should have left the country, and 25 percent said it should have stayed.

Question: Which comes closer to your opinion...? Which political party do you think the news media favor...?



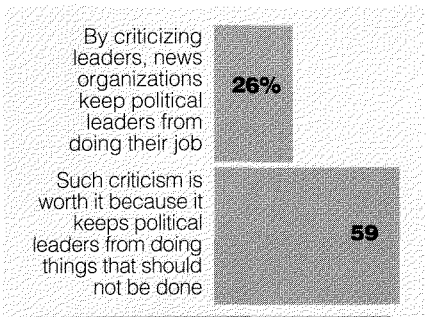
Source: The Gallup Organization, February 2003.

Question: In general, do you think...?



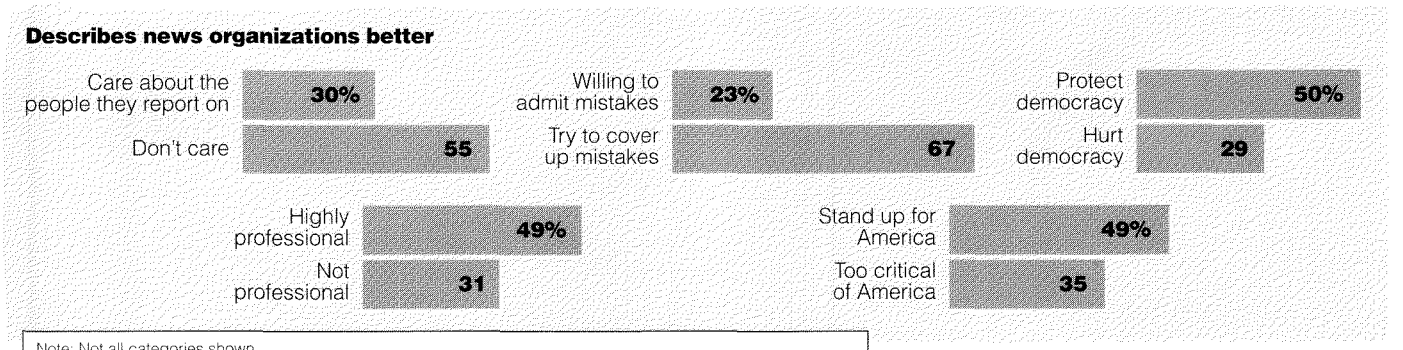
Source: The Gallup Organization, February 2003.

Question: Which position is closer to your opinion...?



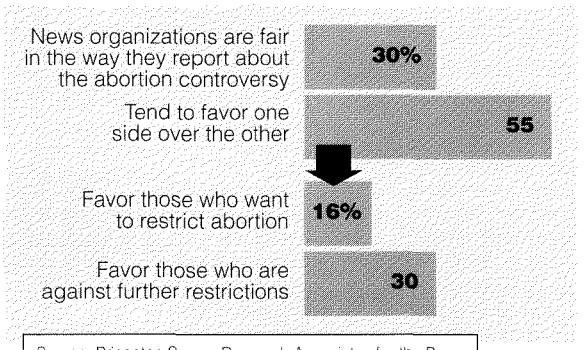
Source: Princeton Survey Research Associates for the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, July 2002.

Question: I'm going to read you some pairs of opposite phrases. After I read each pair, tell me which phrase you feel better describes news organizations generally...?



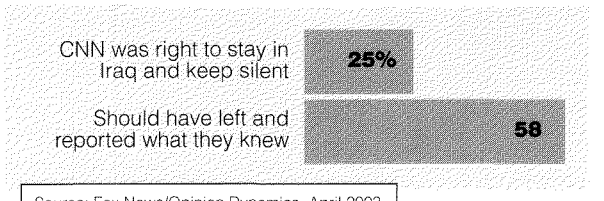
Note: Not all categories shown.
Source: Princeton Survey Research Associates for the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, July 2002.

Question: Generally, are news organizations...? Do they tend to...?



Source: Princeton Survey Research Associates for the Pew Research Center for the People & The Press, January 2003.

Question: A CNN news executive recently admitted that CNN had kept quiet about stories of torture and murder in Iraq in order to continue reporting from there. The executive said the atrocities were not reported, "because doing so would have jeopardized the lives of Iraqis, particularly...our Baghdad staff." Others have said that CNN should have left Iraq and reported on the atrocities. Do you think...?



Source: Fox News/Opinion Dynamics, April 2003.

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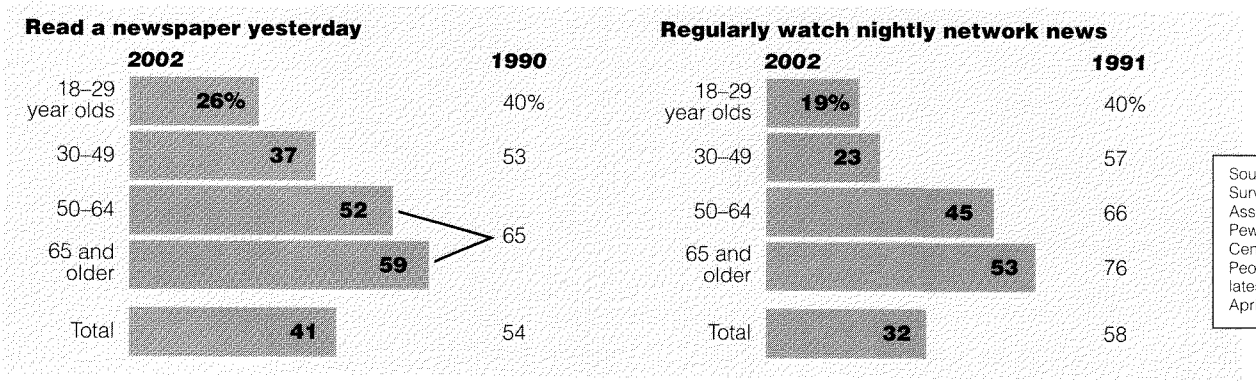
Media Habits

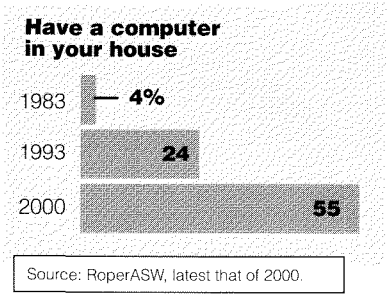
Young people aren't developing the daily newspaper or network news habit, as the data below show. Driven in part by the young, computer ownership has soared. Four percent of the public had a computer at home in 1983; more than half of all homes had one by 2000. Although only 41 percent of the population have gotten news on line, widespread computer availability is changing the way we consume news. Yet the "digital divide" is too simple a term to describe those who use and do not use the Internet. Finally, people say it would be harder to live without telephones and television than other communications media.

Question: Did you...?



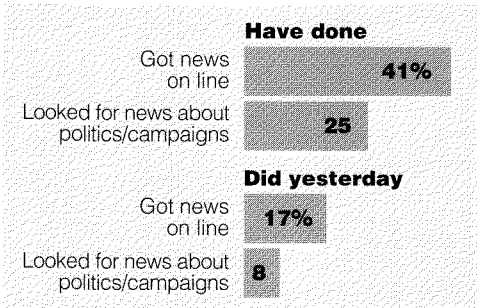
Source: Princeton Survey Research Associates for the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, latest that of April–May 2002.

Question: Does anyone in your household...?



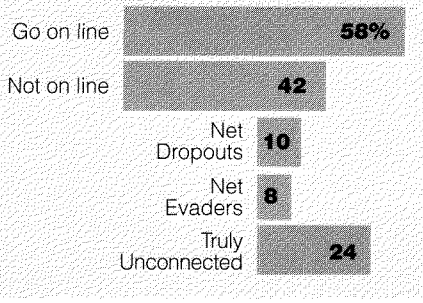
Source: RoperASW, latest that of 2000.

Question: Please tell me if you ever...?

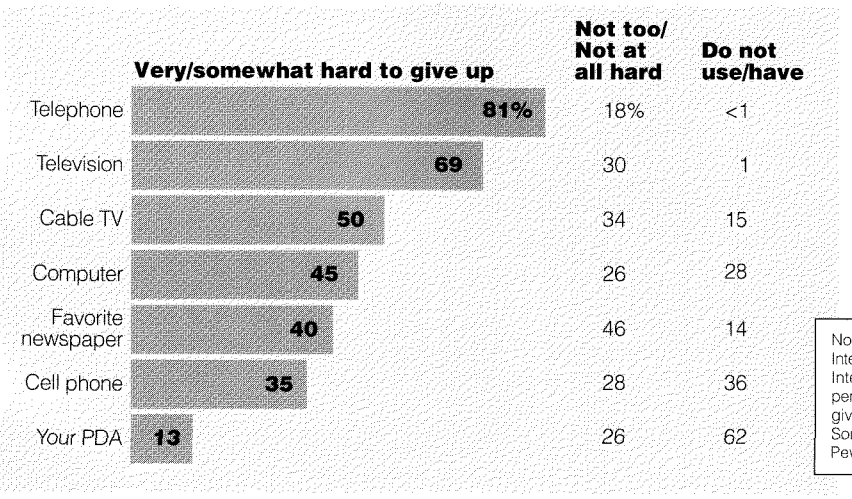


Source: Princeton Survey Research Associates for the Pew Internet & American Life Project, October–November 2002.

Researchers at the Pew Internet & American Life Project suggest that the term "digital divide" is too simple to describe those who use and do not use the Internet. They break the population that is not on line into three groups. "Net Dropouts" once used the Internet but don't do so now. They tend to be young parents, and minorities for whom cost and time pressures may be an explanation. They no longer have use of a computer, although most of them know a convenient place to find one. "Net Evaders" live in households with computers. Some of them have other people go online for them, but they don't go on line themselves. They don't think they are missing much. The "Truly Unconnected" don't have Internet connections. This group tends to be older and have low incomes and low levels of formal education. Most people in this group don't want or feel the need to use the Internet.



Question: Now a few questions about how difficult it would be, if at all, for you to give up some things in your life. If you do not use or have the item just tell me. How...?



Note: Not all categories shown. Sixty-three percent of Internet users said it would be hard for them to give up the Internet and 35 percent said it would not be hard. Sixty percent of Internet users said it would be hard for them to give up e-mail and 37 percent said it would not be hard. Source: Princeton Survey Research Associates for the Pew Internet & American Life Project, March–May 2002.

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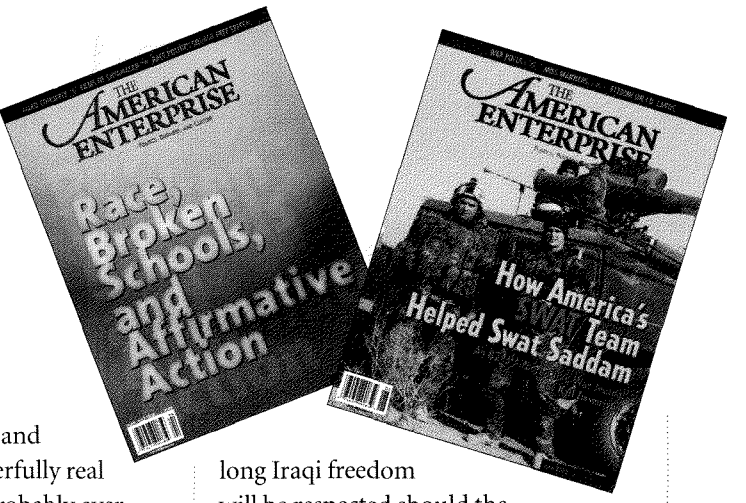
the Mail



I just finished reading Karl Zinsmeister's "Dust and Stars" (June). Rarely have I read anything as compelling and uplifting. Zinsmeister's description of our men in battle filled me with pride and gratitude. How I envy today's fighting men and women, who have an immense sense of purpose and mission. Their current political leaders, likewise, have deep integrity as well as an appreciation of the dangers of battle. Nonetheless, these leaders understand that, at times, battles are unavoidable.

I once asked myself the question, "Where do we get the men who will scale the cliffs of the Pointe-du-Hoc, storm the beaches of Iwo Jima, or climb the stairs of a burning World Trade Center?" Zinsmeister's article reaffirmed what I already knew: We get these men from California, New York, Montana, and all the other states that make up this magnificent country. Thus it was, thus it is, and thus it shall ever be.

Patrick Reynolds
Union, Kentucky

I am Head Representative for the Charlie Company 2-325, 82nd Airborne Division Family Readiness Group, and I really would like to thank you for publishing "Dust and Stars." Not hearing from our husbands and sons for over six weeks has truly been tough. Your article was so detailed that we all got chills from reading it.

Judy Miller
Fayetteville, North Carolina

Karl Zinsmeister's "Dust and Stars" was the most powerfully real "war experience" I will probably ever have. I applaud his insight. He has performed an invaluable service for America by getting to the heart, soul, and spirit of this Iraq war. Thank you Mr. Zinsmeister for your courage, your tenacity, and your own deep understanding.

Mary Lavato
Etowah, North Carolina

Thank you to Karl Zinsmeister for a masterpiece of journalism. This one article gave me more of a sense of the war and better glimpse into the American military personnel than all the media I watched or read over the course of the war. We are fortunate to have such well trained, competent, dedicated, and caring soldiers fighting on the right side for the right principles.

Mr. Zinsmeister's work is a war journal that serves the profession of journalism honorably. His article truly captured the decency of the American military men and women, and their deep commitment to freedom for us and for others everywhere.

Ed Kelly
Palos Verdes, California

With all due respect to Karl Zinsmeister, whose work I admire, the real Iraq story is the question of why we went to war there in the first place. Iraq is a nation one twentieth our size, has never attacked us, could not defeat us, did not want war with us, and posed no credible threat to us. One can only wonder how long Iraqi freedom will be respected should the majority Shiites choose an Islamic republic in a free and fair election.

Bill McCarty
Friendsville, Pennsylvania

I would like to congratulate *TAE* for including Amitai Etzioni's excellent article "Safety Cards" (SCAN, June). National ID cards are a subject that needs far more media exposure. Law abiding citizens should not fear such ID cards: they already carry government IDs anyway. Unfortunately, the message that a huge majority of voting, taxpaying citizens want the security of proper national identification documents seems to be lost on our elected representatives.

Between the libertarian-influenced ultra-conservatives in the Republican Party and the ACLU-obsessed ultra-liberals in the Democratic Party, an "unholy alliance" has formed to block this much needed initiative.

Wayne Skaggs
Wimberley, Texas

Judith Martin's comments about Southern manners and speech patterns (LIVE, June) are absolute hogwash. Our speech patterns and accents can be traced directly to the British Isles, not to African slaves as Martin says.

She is simply repeating an urban legend that has no basis in fact.

Michael Childs
Charlotte, North Carolina

The American Enterprise welcomes your comments. Send e-mail to TAE@aei.org. Or write "The Mail," The American Enterprise, 1150 17th Street N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. Or fax (202) 862-5867. Please include your address and phone number. Published letters may be edited for length and clarity.

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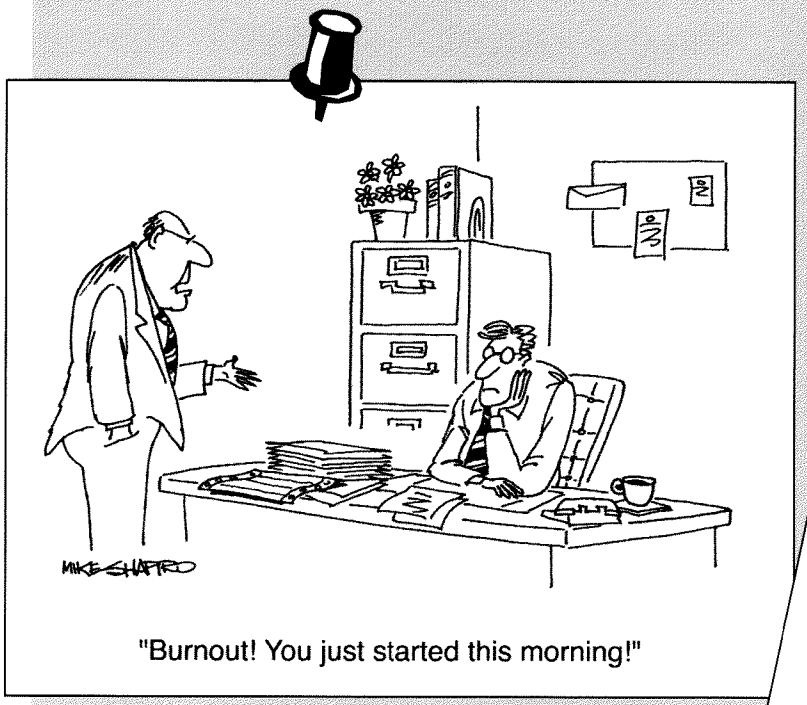
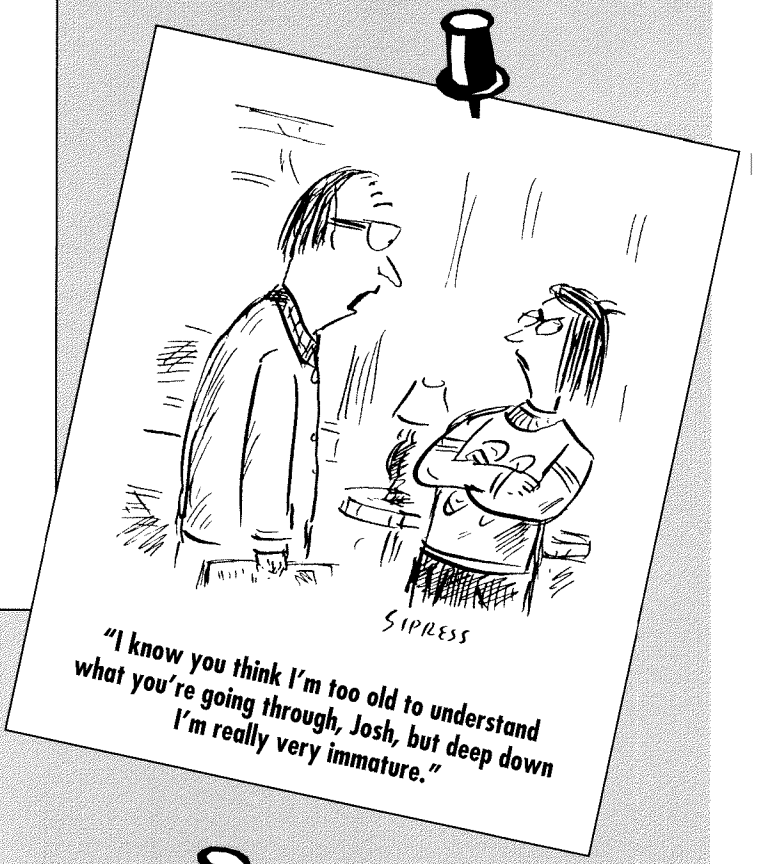
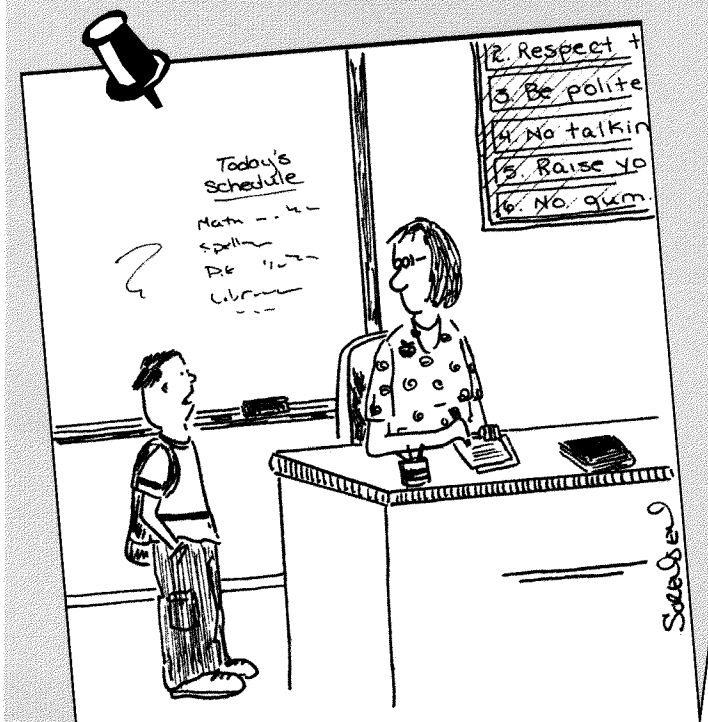


"Burnout! You just started this morning!"



"I know you think I'm too old to understand what you're going through, Josh, but deep down I'm really very immature."



"My parents are expecting miracles from you."

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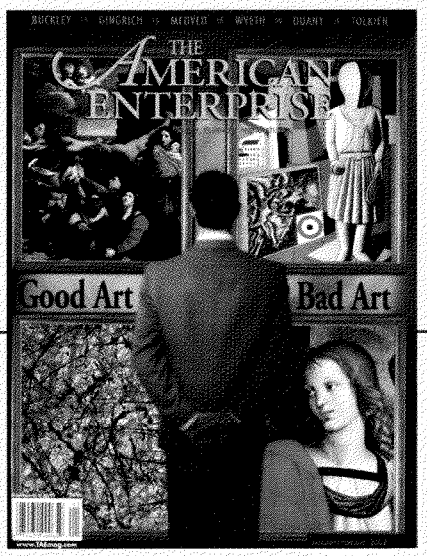
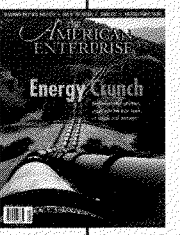


Read the Very Best

"I have been an enthusiastic reader for years. From where I sit, *Commentary* was the most important conservative magazine in the 1980s, but *First Things* rose to claim that title in the early 1990s, and then gave way to *The American Enterprise*, which I think has been the most important conservative magazine since about 1997."
—Mark Henrie, Senior Editor/Journals, Intercollegiate Studies Institute



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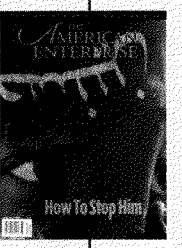

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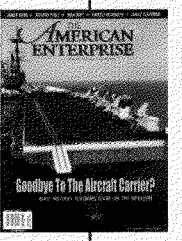
"By far the best national policy magazine being published today." —Merrick Carey, CEO, Lexington Institute



"I love *The American Enterprise*. The magazine reads wonderfully." —Abigail Thernstrom, Harvard University

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